

“Wanga”

Reading Comprehension – Short Stories

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



I, Nancy Norris, believer of nothing, order my spell kit on the Internet.

This might sound crazy, but I have run out of more **sane** ideas.

I have looked in the want ads. I have sent my resume to a million companies. I have gone to businesses up and down my block asking for work.

I need a job. I need money. I need these things fast. I am **desperate**.

I am about to lose my house. I am about to lose my car. I have been out of work for 8 months.

The Internet is free at the library. This is a very good thing. I see a site that sells witch doctor spell kits.

WARNING: Do not ask for something unless you truly want it to **come true!**

There are Love Kits. These get someone to love you back. There are New Life Kits. These make you happy. There are Money Kits. These bring you money, riches and an easy life.

Of course, I choose the Money Kit. This is what I need. I truly want it to come true.

I have \$20 left on my credit card. I use it all to order my spell kit. Don't laugh.

I order the kit on Monday. It says it should arrive in two days. So I wait. Wednesday passes. I wait and wait. Finally it gets here after four days. I am kind of upset it took so long. I hope it doesn't take that long for the spell to work.

Like a wild animal, I tear open the box. Inside is the kit with a Wanga doll. The doll has been blessed by an actual witch doctor and is a very important part of making my spell come true. That is what the box says, anyway.

Wanga is about 6 inches tall. He has bushy black hair. He is dressed in a furry outfit that looks like a bathrobe. Hopefully, he will be my new best friend.

There are three different powders in the kit. Each has its own separate bag.

The kit also comes with a set of **detailed** instructions. I am to follow them exactly.

I spread the powders out on the floor and place my Wanga doll next to them. I hope for the best. My mortgage is due tomorrow.

Questions:

1) As used at the beginning of the story, what does **sane** mean?

- A. absurd
- B. powerful
- C. rational
- D. foolish

2) Why does Nancy order a spell kit?

- I. She needs a cure.
- II. She needs a job.
- III. She needs money.

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

3) Given what is said in the passage, what is another way to write the following sentence?

*"I am **desperate**."*

- A. I am crazy.
- B. I full of hope.
- C. I am willing to try anything.
- D. I am not sure about anything anymore.

4) What can be said about Nancy from this passage?

- A. She is well read.
- B. She is very serious.
- C. She was once very wealthy.
- D. She can make fun of herself.

5) If something **comes true**, it

- A. happens
- B. tells the truth
- C. brings money
- D. is fantastic

6) Which kit does Nancy order?

- A. the Love Kit
- B. the New Life Kit
- C. the Money Kit
- D. the New Job Kit

7) What does the Wanga doll look like?

- I. It is black.
- II. It is six inches tall.
- III. It has bushy hair.

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

8) Which sentence from the story is most likely an exaggeration?

- A. "I need a job."
- B. "Wanga is about 6 inches tall."
- C. "Finally it gets here after four days."
- D. "I have sent my resume to a million companies."

Questions (continued):

- 9) According to the story, why would a person buy the New Life Kit?
- A. to have a baby
 - B. to become happy
 - C. to move to a new town
 - D. to be cured from sickness
- 10) The Wanga doll is special because
- A. it has a furry outfit
 - B. it comes with detailed instructions
 - C. it is given to Nancy by her best friend
 - D. it has been blessed by a witch doctor

- 11) The kit arrives on
- A. Monday
 - B. Wednesday
 - C. Thursday
 - D. Friday
- 12) As used at the end of the story, which would be the opposite of **detailed** instructions?
- A. many instructions
 - B. vague instructions
 - C. specific instructions
 - D. funny instructions

- 13) How does Nancy pay for her spell kit?
- A. with cash
 - B. with a check
 - C. with a credit card
 - D. with a money order
- 14) *“Like a wild animal, I tear open the box.”* This is an example of
- A. simile, meaning a comparison using like or as
 - B. metaphor, meaning a comparison in which one thing is represented as another
 - C. hyperbole, meaning the use of exaggeration to emphasize an idea
 - D. allusion, meaning a passing or casual reference

Are you superstitious? Why or why not?

Answers and Explanations

1) **C**

At the beginning of the story, Nancy says, “This might sound crazy, but I have run out of more sane ideas.” We can understand from this sentence that *sane* means not crazy—reasonable or sound of mind. *Rational* means reasonable or logical. Therefore **(C)** is correct.

Absurd means ridiculous or ludicrous. Since *sane* means sound of mind or reasonable, **(A)** is incorrect. *Powerful* means strong, not reasonable. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. *Foolish* means silly or unwise, not reasonable. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

2) **C**

Nothing in the story suggests that Nancy is ill. Therefore, Nancy does not need a cure. This eliminates **option (I)**. At the beginning of the story, Nancy says, “I need a job.” This supports **option (II)**. Nancy also says, “I need money.” This supports **option (III)**. Therefore **(C)** is correct.

3) **C**

At the beginning of the story, Nancy says, “I have looked in the want ads. I have sent my resume to a million companies. I have gone to businesses up and down my block asking for work.” We can understand from this that Nancy has tried everything she can think of to find a job. Nancy then tells us that she needs a job and money fast, because Nancy is going to lose her house and her car. We can understand from this that Nancy is out of money. Nancy has “been out of work for 8 months.” This means that Nancy has been looking for work for a long time without success. *Desperate* means driven by a great need or distress. When Nancy says, “I am *desperate*,” we can infer that Nancy means that she is willing to do anything she can to find some money to pay her bills. Therefore **(C)** is correct.

Crazy means foolish or senseless. Nancy is moved to act out of a great need, not out of foolishness. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. When someone has *hope*, she wishes for something that she believes will happen. Nancy has tried everything and failed. Nancy is not full of hope. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. Nancy is not unsure of what is happening. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

4) **D**

At the beginning of the story, Nancy tells us that ordering the spell kit makes her “feel pretty silly.” We can understand from this that Nancy knows that ordering the spell kit is a funny way to deal with her problem. Nancy also makes a few jokes throughout the story. For example, when it took four days for the kit to arrive, Nancy jokes, “I hope it doesn’t take that long for the spell to work.” Nancy also jokes that the Wanga doll will be her “new best friend.” From these sentences, we can understand that Nancy doesn’t take the Money Kit too seriously. She makes fun of herself. Therefore **(D)** is correct.

The story does not give us any information about Nancy’s educational background. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. Nancy makes many jokes about ordering the Money Kit, which tells us she is not very serious. Therefore **(B)** is

incorrect. The story does not give us any information about how much money Nancy used to have. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect.

5) **A**

In the middle of the story, we learn that the website that sells the spell kits for money, love and happiness says, "WARNING: Do not ask for something unless you truly want it to come true!" Nancy then says she chooses the Money Kit because, "This is what I need. I truly want it to *come true*." We know that Nancy actually does want money very badly, so we can infer that *come true* means to actually happen. Therefore **(A)** is correct.

A spell cannot talk, so it cannot tell the truth. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. The website sells kits to bring love and happiness as well as money. Therefore, come true cannot mean "brings money." Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. Something can come true, but it might be bad rather than good, so "come true" cannot mean "fantastic." Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

6) **C**

In the middle of the story, Nancy says, "I choose the money kit." Therefore **(C)** is correct. The story does not contain information to support choices **(A)**, **(B)** and **(D)**. Therefore they are incorrect.

7) **C**

Although Nancy says the Wanga doll has "black hair," Nancy does not say that the doll is black. This eliminates **option (I)**. At the end of the story, Nancy says, "Wanga is about 6 inches tall." This supports **option (II)**. Nancy says the Wanga doll "has bushy black hair." This supports **option (III)**. Therefore **(C)** is correct.

8) **D**

Nancy says she has been out of work for 8 months. It is impossible for someone to send a resume to "a million companies" in that time. Therefore, **(D)** is correct.

We know that Nancy really does need a job, so that is not an exaggeration. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. 6 inches tall is not an unusual size for a doll, so it is not an exaggeration. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. The sentence "Finally, it gets here after four days" is true, not an exaggeration. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect.

9) **B**

In the middle of the story, Nancy says, "There are New Life Kits. These make you happy." We can understand from these statements that New Life Kits help you become happy. Therefore **(B)** is correct. The story does not contain information to support choices **(A)**, **(C)** and **(D)**. Therefore they are incorrect.

10) **D**

At the end of the story, Nancy opens up the box, which contains the kit and a Wanga doll. Nancy says, "The doll has been blessed by an actual witch doctor and is a very important part of making my spell come true." We can

understand from this sentence that the spell requires the doll to be blessed by a witch doctor to work, or to make it special. Therefore **(D)** is correct.

While the Wanga doll does have a furry outfit, the story gives us no reason to believe that the outfit makes the doll special. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. The kit comes with detailed instructions, not the doll. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. The doll was not a gift, because Nancy had to pay for it, so **(C)** is incorrect.

11)**D**

Nancy orders the kit on Monday. The kit arrives “after four days.” Four days after Monday is Friday. Therefore **(D)** is correct.

Nancy orders the kit on Monday, but the kit arrives “after four days.” Therefore, the kit does not arrive on Monday. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. Nancy expected the kit to arrive “in two days,” which would have been Wednesday. However, “Wednesday passes,” so **(B)** is incorrect. The kit doesn’t arrive until “after four days,” and Thursday is only three days later. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect.

12)**B**

At the end of the story, Nancy says that the kit “comes with a set of detailed instructions.” Nancy is supposed to “follow them exactly.” Since Nancy can only follow the directions “exactly” if they are *specific*, we can understand from this that *detailed* here means *specific*. *Vague* means imprecise or not explicit. *Vague* is the opposite of *detailed*. Therefore **(B)** is correct.

Many means a large number. A large number is not the opposite of *specific*. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. Since *detailed* means *specific*, *specific* is not the opposite of *detailed*. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. *Funny* instructions could be detailed or not, so **(D)** is incorrect.

13)**C**

In the middle of the story, Nancy says, “I have \$20 left on my credit card. I use it all to order my spell kit.” We can understand from this that Nancy used the money on her credit card to order the spell kit. Therefore **(C)** is correct. The story does not contain information to support choices **(A)**, **(B)** and **(D)**. Therefore they are incorrect.

14)**A**

When Nancy says, “Like a wild animal, I tear open the box,” Nancy tells the reader that she is similar to a wild animal in the way she tears the box open. This sentence uses the word like to make a comparison. Therefore **(A)** is correct.

The sentence says Nancy is like a wild animal. The sentence does not say that Nancy is a wild animal. Therefore, Nancy is not represented as a wild animal in a metaphor. **(B)** is incorrect. The reader can understand that Nancy did tear open the box “like a wild animal.” This is not a use of exaggeration. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. Nancy does not mention a wild animal in passing. Nancy directly compares her actions to those of a wild animal. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.