

“Late”

Reading Comprehension – Short Stories

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



Martin is **in a hurry**.

He is late to work again.

Martin's boss doesn't like it when he is late. Martin was late last week. His boss told him not to be late again. He really wasn't joking either. He was serious. "**I mean it**," Martin remembers him saying.

Martin thinks he might lose his job if he is late again.

The time is now 7:15 am. Martin needs to be at work by 7:30. It takes him 22 minutes to drive to work.

"Things don't look good," he says to himself.

Martin runs out of the house. He jumps in his car. He puts the car in reverse. He backs up without looking.

BOOM!

There is a sound like someone hitting a drum. Martin's car jerks to a stop. He has hit the car parked behind him.

"Oh, no!" Martin exclaims. He is angry now.

Martin looks at his watch. It is 7:18. He needs to get to work.

He looks around. There is no one on the street. There is no one **nearby**.

He looks in the parked car. It is empty.

Martin drives off quickly.

He gets to work 10 minutes late.

Martin's boss is not around. "Thank goodness," he says to himself.

He stops worrying. He sits at his desk to work.

During lunch, Martin goes out to the parking lot. He looks at his car. There is a big dent in the back.

Then he thinks about the other car—the car he hit this morning. "I know that car is damaged too," he thinks.

He feels **guilty**.

"That was not right," Martin says to himself.

He will see if the car is still outside his house when he gets off work.



Questions:

- 1) At the beginning of the story, Martin is **in a hurry**. What does this mean?
- A. He is running.
 - B. He is angry.
 - C. He is late.
 - D. He is moving fast.
- 2) Why is Martin in a hurry?
- A. because he is late
 - B. because he is running
 - C. because he is moving fast
 - D. because he had a car accident
- 3) Martin remembers when his boss told him, "**I mean it.**" What does this mean?
- A. The boss is serious.
 - B. The boss is angry.
 - C. The boss is emotional.
 - D. The boss is interested.
- 4) What does Martin think will happen if he is late to work again?
- A. He will get a pay cut.
 - B. He will need to buy a watch.
 - C. He will get fired from his job.
 - D. He will need to adjust his schedule.
- 5) What time does Martin need to be at work?
- A. 6:30
 - B. 7:15
 - C. 7:30
 - D. 8:15
- 6) If Martin leaves the house at 7:15, what time does he get to work?
- A. 7:32
 - B. 7:37
 - C. 7:40
 - D. 7:52
- 7) What is the loud noise?
- A. Martin yelling
 - B. police sirens sounding
 - C. Martin driving off the road
 - D. Martin hitting someone's car
- 8) Martin checks if there is anyone nearby. What does **nearby** mean?
- A. in
 - B. next to
 - C. close by
 - D. far away
- 9) Why doesn't Martin get in trouble with his boss today?
- A. His boss is not around.
 - B. He gets to work on time.
 - C. His boss feels sorry for him.
 - D. Martin says he is sorry for being late.
- 10) Who does Martin talk to in the story?
- I. himself
 - II. his boss
 - III. his friends
- A. I only
 - B. I and II
 - C. II and III
 - D. I, II, and III

Questions (continued):

11) How do Martin's feelings change during the story?

- A. from hurried to guilty to angry
- B. from angry to guilty to hurried
- C. from hurried to angry to guilty
- D. from angry to hurried to angry

12) Why did Martin look around after he hit the car?

- A. He needed help.
- B. He wanted a ride to work.
- C. He needed to check the time.
- D. He wanted to check if anyone saw him.

13) As used at the end of the story, what does it mean to feel **guilty**?

- A. to feel bad about doing something
- B. to feel worried about doing something
- C. to feel unsure about doing something
- D. to feel like you want to change something

14) What might Martin do if the car he hit is still there after work?

- I. He might try to hide the dent.
 - II. He might try to find the owner.
 - III. He might leave a note on the windshield with his phone number on it.
- A. I only
 - B. I and II
 - C. II and III
 - D. I, II, and III

Do you think Martin is a good employee? Why or why not?

Answers and Explanations

1) **D**

At the beginning of the story, “Martin is in a hurry.” In paragraph 7, “Martin *runs* out of the house. He *jumps* in the car.” People run and jump in order to move fast. Being in a hurry means “moving fast.” Therefore **(D)** is correct.

Martin runs because he is in a hurry. But being in a hurry does not just mean running. People can be in a hurry and move fast in other ways, such as driving fast or walking fast. This makes **(A)** incorrect. In the middle of the story, it says, “He is angry now.” He is angry because he hit another car. But he was in a hurry before he hit the car. So in a hurry does not mean angry. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. In paragraph 2, the story says, “Martin is late.” People are sometimes in a hurry because they are late. But *in a hurry* does not always mean *late*. People can be in a hurry for other reasons besides for being late. For example: “John’s favorite team is playing baseball at the park. He is in a hurry to go see them.” In this example, John is in a hurry because he is *excited*, not late. This means **(C)** is incorrect.

2) **A**

In paragraph 1, it says, “Martin is in a hurry.” The next paragraph explains, “He is late to work again.” Martin is in a hurry because he is late. Therefore **(A)** is correct.

Martin is running because he is in a hurry. He is not in a hurry because he is running. This means **(B)** is incorrect. Martin is moving fast because he is in a hurry. He is not in a hurry because he is moving fast. This means **(C)** is incorrect. Martin gets in a car accident because he is in a hurry, not the other way around. This means **(D)** is incorrect.

3) **A**

In paragraph 3, Martin’s boss tells him “not to be late again.” We also learn that Martin’s boss “was serious.” Martin’s boss says, “I mean it.” Because we already know that Martin’s boss is “serious,” we can understand that “I mean it” means that the boss is serious. Therefore **(A)** is correct.

We know that “Martin’s boss does not like it when he is late,” but the story does not say he is angry. Instead, the story says that he was “serious” and “not joking” when he told Martin, “I mean it.” This makes **(B)** incorrect. There is no information in the story to make us think Martin’s boss is emotional. This makes **(C)** incorrect. There is no information in the story to make us think Martin’s boss is interested. This makes **(D)** incorrect.

4) **C**

In paragraph 4, it says, “Martin thinks he might lose his job if he is late again.” Being “fired” means losing your job. If you get fired, the boss says you can’t work there anymore. Therefore **(C)** is correct. The story does not contain

information to support answer choices **(A)**, **(B)**, and **(D)**. Therefore they are incorrect.

5) **C**

In paragraph 4, the author says, "Martin needs to be at work by 7:30 am." Therefore **(C)** is correct. The story does not mention the time 6:30. This makes **(A)** incorrect. Although the story says the current time is 7:15, this is not the time Martin needs to be at work. This means **(B)** is incorrect. The story does not mention the time 8:15. This makes **(D)** incorrect.

6) **B**

In paragraph 5, we learn that it takes Martin 22 minutes to drive to work. The question tells us that Martin leaves the house at 7:15. In order to find out how long it takes Martin to drive to work, we need to add the time it takes Martin to drive to work (22 minutes) to the time he leaves (7:15). So, $7:15 + 22 = 7:37$. Martin gets to work at 7:37 if he leaves at 7:15. Therefore **(B)** is correct.

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

7) **D**

Both paragraph 8 and paragraph 9 give examples of loud noises. Paragraph 8 simply says, "BOOM!" In paragraph 9, Martin hears a "sound like someone hitting a drum." In paragraph 9, the author says that Martin "has hit the car parked behind him." It is clear that "hitting someone's car" caused the loud noise Martin hears. Therefore **(D)** is correct.

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

8) **C**

In paragraph 12, Martin "looks around." He sees that "there is no one on the street. There is no one nearby." Martin is looking to see if anyone is close by him. Therefore **(C)** is correct.

It would not make sense to say "there is no one in." *In* is a preposition which requires an object, such as "in the car" or "in the box." This means **(A)** is incorrect. Martin is looking on the entire street, not just right next to him. This makes **(B)** incorrect. Martin would not be able to see that "there is no one far away" just by looking. Also, he is worried about people near him who might have seen the accident. He is not worried about people who are far away and did not see it. This makes **(D)** incorrect.

9) **A**

In paragraph 16 the story says, "Martin's boss is not around." Martin does not "get in trouble with his boss" because his boss "is not around." Therefore **(A)** is correct. The story does not contain information to support answer choices **(B)**, **(C)**, and **(D)**. Therefore they are incorrect.

10) **A**

In paragraph 16, Martin says, “Thank goodness.” He says this “to himself.” In paragraph 21, the author writes, “‘That was not right,’ Martin says to himself.” Both these paragraphs show Martin talking to himself. This supports **option (I)**. Martin does not talk to his boss. This eliminates **option (II)**. He also does not talk to his friends. This eliminates **option (III)**. Therefore **(A)** is correct.

11) **C**

At the beginning of the story, in paragraph 1, “Martin is in a hurry.” In the middle of the story, in paragraph 10, Martin is “angry” after he hits the car. By the end of the story, in paragraph 20, Martin “feels guilty.” Martin goes from hurried to angry to guilty. Therefore **(C)** is correct. The story does not contain information to support answer choices **(A)**, **(B)**, and **(D)**. Therefore they are incorrect.

12) **D**

Paragraph 12 says that Martin “looks around” but there is “no one on the street” and “no one nearby.” He is trying to find out whether or not anyone saw him hit the other car. When he realizes that no one is around, he drives off without reporting the accident. Therefore **(D)** is correct.

Martin does not need help, so **(A)** is incorrect. He has a car, so he does not need a ride to work. This means **(B)** is incorrect. He has a watch, so he does not need to ask anyone the time. This means **(C)** is incorrect.

13) **A**

guilty (*adjective*): responsible for doing something wrong.

In paragraph 19, Martin thinks about the damage he did when he hit the other car. In paragraph 20, it says, “He feels guilty.” In paragraph 21, Martin thinks, “That was not right.” He thinks what he did was wrong, and he feels bad about it. Using this information we can understand that feeling guilty means feeling bad about doing something wrong. Therefore **(A)** is correct.

Martin was worried about being late to work, but once he gets there, he “stops worrying.” This means **(B)** is incorrect. Martin does not feel unsure at the end of the story. He knows what he did was “not right.” This makes **(C)** incorrect. Martin might wish to change what he did, but the story does not tell us that information. Wanting to change something is feeling regretful, not guilty. This means **(D)** is incorrect.

14) **C**

In paragraph 20, Martin “feels guilty” because he damaged the other car. He does not want to hide the damage. He wants to take responsibility for what he did. This eliminates **option (I)**. Because Martin feels guilty, he wants to tell the owner that he hit his or her car. Martin could do this by trying to find the owner. This supports **option (II)**. He could also do this by leaving a note on the windshield with his phone number on it. This supports **option (III)**. Therefore **(C)** is correct.