

**GRADE 8**  
**Reading**

**Administered April 2018**

**RELEASED**



# READING

Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question. Then fill in the answer on your answer document.

## The Road Almost Taken

*by Joe Holley*

- 1 I was 5 years old that summer afternoon when my brother and I set off on our daring adventure. Kenny was 3.
- 2 Our prairie schooner, our Pinta-Niña-Santa Maria, was our little gray wagon. It used to be a little red wagon, but it had gotten so scarred and dented after a couple of years of rough treatment—running it into concrete-block back-porch steps will do that to a wagon—that we begged Daddy to paint it. He did one Saturday afternoon, but the only paint he had around the house was gray primer, which he swabbed on with a brush. So now our wagon was a dull, monochromatic gray.
- 3 “Take this list up to Miss Andrews’ (store).” Mama handed me a folded \$5 bill. “Put it in your pocket and don’t lose it,” she said.
- 4 Kenny and I had taken grocery runs before; the little neighborhood store was only a block and a half away. This time, though, I had a secret mission in mind. For months, weeks—who knows how a 5-year-old measures time?—I had yearned to branch out, to explore the next street over. Why? Because it was there, I suppose. That’s all I remember about motive.
- 5 But the next street over was off-limits—too close to the busy Dallas Highway, Mama said. We made the occasional foray up to Miss Andrews’ store on Parrish, but never went any farther.
- 6 On this day, though, my devious 5-year-old mind had concocted a plan. I’m not sure whether I shared it with Kenny, but he rarely questioned anything his big brother told him, so he would go along, regardless. I was excited, so I probably did tell him about the big adventure I was planning.
- 7 My blond-haired little brother sat cross-legged in the wagon. I flipped the handle back to him so he could steer while I pushed from the back. We rattled down our dirt driveway and onto the street. In my mind’s eye, I can still see us on that long-ago afternoon: two little boys in shorts beneath a glaring summer sun, both of us dusty and sweat-streaked, shirtless and barefoot.
- 8 We passed the light green house of our retired neighbors, the Wills, and their corn patch in the empty lot between our houses, the stalks yellow and withered. We passed Mrs. Rachle’s house and looked for Rosie, our playmate and best friend. She stayed with her grandmother during the day while her parents worked. She would probably be up for an adventure, but we didn’t see her. She might have been taking her afternoon nap.

- 9 Head down and bent over almost double, keeping a sharp eye out for painful goathead weeds that had snaked onto the shoulder of the road during the hot Central Texas summer, I pushed Kenny to the intersection with Parrish, a slightly busier street than Strickland. We looked both ways, twice, as we had been taught, and then scurried across the street and turned left for the half-block stretch to Miss Andrews' store.
- 10 A bell jingled as we pushed open the screen door and walked into the small store, its wooden floor smelling of the oily red powder Miss Andrews used for sweeping. We picked up the items on our list—probably a loaf of bread, maybe a stick of butter for something Mama was fixing for supper—and set them on the counter, which was about eye-high for me. Mr. Byford, Miss Andrews' son-in-law, rang them up. As we waited, I kept thinking about our secret adventure. I was excited, nervous, worried.
- 11 We hurried back outside. Kenny settled himself in the wagon, and I had him turn the handle toward the unknown. Soon we were trundling down the forbidden street, houses on one side, and, across a weed-choked bar ditch on the other, the back of gas stations and other businesses along the highway. As I pushed, I looked up occasionally, but I couldn't enjoy the new sights. I was feeling too guilty.
- 12 We were passing a vacant lot, and through the gap I could see our house on Strickland. That meant, of course, that anybody who happened to be looking could see us, as well. I couldn't stand it. "Turn around," I muttered to Kenny. We retraced our path back to Parrish. Passing the store, I saw Mr. Byford leaning out the door. He was beckoning to us.
- 13 I knew what had happened. Mama had seen us through the vacant lot and had called him. I could imagine what she said: "If those boys come back by, Mr. Byford, tell 'em I said they better get home this minute!" I knew we were in trouble. I hoped it wasn't trouble big enough that she'd tell Daddy when he got home from work.
- 14 I pushed the wagon through the bottle cap-strewn gravel in front of the store. Standing in the sun, I squinted up toward Mr. Byford, who stared down at me, the hint of a smile on his face. "You boys forgot your groceries," he said, holding out the brown paper bag.
- 15 I took the bag from him and put it in the wagon behind Kenny. We headed straight home, where Mama was blissfully unaware of her sons' errant adventure.
- 16 I went outside and sat on the front-porch steps, chin in both hands, elbows on my knees. Behind the Thomases' house across from ours, I could see the other road—the road almost taken. Maybe I'd try again someday. Maybe when I was 6.

"The Road Almost Taken" by Joe Holley, published in *Texas Co-op Power*, May 2009. Text copyright © 2009 by Joe Holley. Reprinted by permission of the author.

1 Read the following dictionary entry.

**stretch** \ˈstreɪtʃ\ *n*  
1. something that seems beyond what is normal 2. the length or extent of an area 3. a continuous period of time 4. the amount of elasticity of something

Which definition best matches the way the word stretch is used in paragraph 9?

- A Definition 1
  - B Definition 2
  - C Definition 3
  - D Definition 4
- 

2 What does the sensory language in paragraph 7 help the reader understand?

- F The doubts the author had about being able to complete his adventure
  - G The difficulty the author had pushing his wagon along the street
  - H The distance between the author's house and the store
  - J The details that the author remembers most vividly about that day
- 

3 Paragraphs 8 and 9 are mainly a description of —

- A the way the author and Kenny worked together to push the wagon along
- B the typical routine the author followed when he went to the grocery store
- C the different neighbors the author saw on the way to the grocery store
- D the safety measures the author took when walking along the shoulder of the road

4 Why did the author tell Kenny to turn the wagon around in paragraph 12?

- F He noticed that the groceries were not in the wagon with Kenny.
  - G He was satisfied seeing only a small part of the other street.
  - H He remembered that his mother was waiting for them to come home.
  - J He decided that the new experience was not worth getting in trouble.
- 

5 The author describes his experience in a way that highlights —

- A how significant he thought going to the next street was when he was five years old
  - B how long it took him to push the wagon to the neighborhood store when he was a boy
  - C how important it was for him to take care of his little brother when they were younger
  - D how much he worried about following his mother's rules when he was a child
- 

6 What is the main theme of the selection?

- F Breaking the rules usually leads to a negative outcome.
- G People often have a strong desire to explore the unknown.
- H People tend to forget things when they are in a hurry.
- J Going to a new location can be an exciting experience.

7 What is the best summary of the selection?

- A** When he was five years old, the author decided to venture down a forbidden street after buying some groceries for his mother. The author went partway down the new street but turned around because he was afraid of getting caught. When the shopkeeper waved him down on the way home, the author was sure his mother knew what he had done. Even though he wasn't in trouble, the author went straight home.
- B** As a five-year-old, the author had wanted to explore the next street over, even though his mother thought the street was dangerous. One day, after he shopped for groceries at the corner store for his mother, he pushed his wagon down the forbidden street. He then turned around after only a few minutes.
- C** When the author was five years old, his mother often asked him to take his wagon to the corner store down the street and pick up groceries for her. On one occasion the author tried to explore a different street on his way home. But because he forgot to take the groceries with him, he had to go back to the store, where the clerk was waiting outside for him.
- D** One day when he was five, the author made a plan to explore a street after getting groceries for his mother. He took his wagon along his normal route to the store, but then he traveled down the other street after he bought the groceries. When he reached a vacant field, he thought he would be caught, so he returned home.

Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question. Then fill in the answer on your answer document.

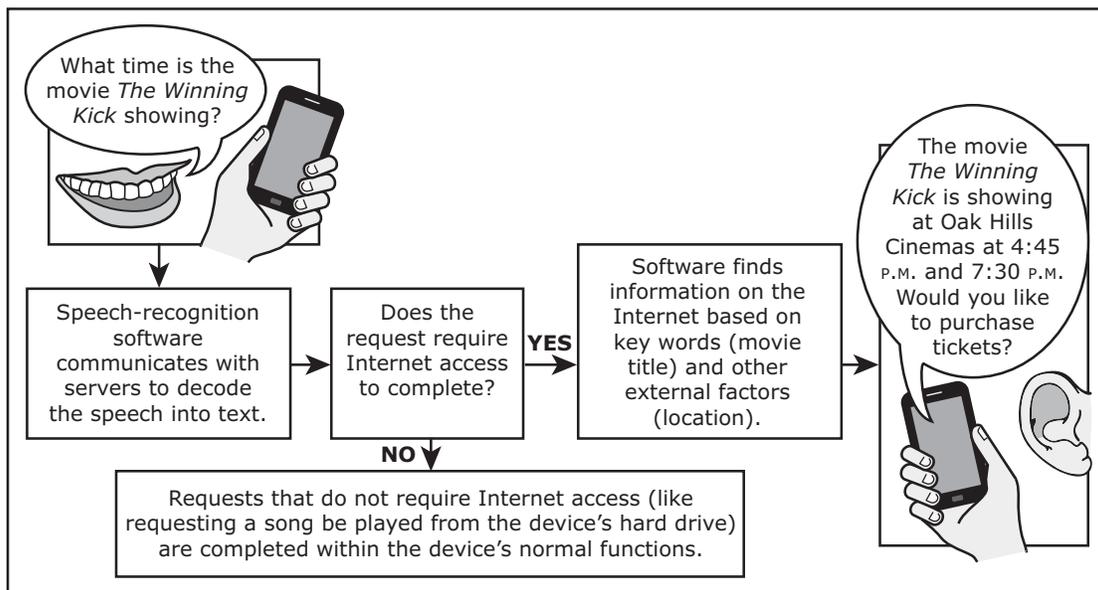
## Talking to Technology

- 1 Ever call a movie theater to find out showtimes? Or call a customer service center for help solving a problem? Chances are you didn't speak to a human being. You probably gave commands to an automated speech-recognition system. These types of systems are efficient money-saving tools that allow companies to address many customer concerns with minimal human intervention.
- 2 The technology for speech-recognition systems has advanced greatly since its inception in the 1950s. At first, computers could understand only a limited set of words spoken very slowly and enunciated clearly. Today many voice systems can understand language when spoken at a normal conversational rate. Despite the efficiency of these systems, many people find them impersonal, stilted, and sometimes frustrating. Overcoming these barriers is a major design goal of many speech-software developers.
- 3 In 1950, British mathematician Alan Turing predicted that by the year 2000, technology would have advanced to a point where 70 percent of the time, humans would be unable to determine whether they were communicating with a machine. Each year at the Loebner Prize Competition, computer scientists put their machines to the Turing test. The Turing test consists of a human judge chatting with a computer and another human via text. After a set amount of interaction time, the judge must determine which participant is the computer and which is the human. Even the advanced human-machine interfaces used today are unable to trick the judge consistently into thinking a computer is a human.
- 4 Why is this?
- 5 Simply put, the reason is that human beings rely on more than words to produce utterances and derive meaning from them. People also rely on context, tone, facial expressions, body movements, and objects in the world around them to fully convey or interpret a message. Even in text, the small subtleties of language, like sarcasm and humor, are often lost on machines.
- 6 One significant recent achievement in the realm of talking computers is the debut of virtual personal assistants (VPAs) on mobile phones. The most noted of these is Apple's iPhone VPA, Siri. If you tell Siri that you want to schedule lunch with a friend, "she" can set the appointment in your phone in seconds. The VPA can also hold a basic "conversation" and has earned fame for its elementary sense of humor. Still, the humor is preprogrammed and can be triggered only when the human user speaks certain key phrases or words.
- 7 While the potential for spontaneous communication between a human and a machine may seem exciting, this possibility concerns some people. Some experts worry about people's attachment to these machines and fear that the art of successful human-to-human conversation will be undeveloped in younger

generations. They worry that people won't be able to display the right emotion or tone in conversations because they haven't been practicing those skills. Others fear that machines will take over functions that were traditionally performed by humans, such as customer service.

- 8 Another concern often associated with the development of new technology is the invasion of privacy. When people use certain speech-recognition applications, they leave behind an audio track of their speech. When you ask a VPA for directions, your speech is often sent and saved to a remote server for processing. This digital trail may lead to data mining, or the collection of large quantities of personal data.
- 9 For now, however, the continuing evolution of speech-recognition software is thrilling to behold. Asking for and acquiring information from an automated source has never been easier. Leading companies in the speech recognition world hope to make human communication with machines as seamless as possible—in other words, just like communicating with another human.

### How VPAs Work



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- 8** The details in paragraph 5 support the idea that —
- F** humans use a lot of sarcasm and humor in everyday speech
  - G** miscommunication between humans is more likely when they cannot see facial expressions
  - H** language software is designed for communicating information rather than making jokes
  - J** human communication involves features that cannot easily be replicated by computers
- 

- 9** What is the main idea of paragraphs 7 and 8?
- A** When people use speech-recognition applications, their privacy may be invaded.
  - B** As people talk more to computers, they may become less able to interact with humans.
  - C** Advances in technology may cause humans to lose their jobs to computers.
  - D** The use of speech-recognition technology poses a variety of potential problems.
- 

- 10** According to the selection, speech-software developers are still striving to develop speech-recognition technology that —
- F** can comprehend language as quickly as people speak it
  - G** helps people complete simple tasks on electronic devices
  - H** makes people feel as if they are speaking to a human
  - J** minimizes the need for most types of human interaction

**11** Which idea does the author emphasize throughout the selection?

- A** Speech-recognition technology saves companies time and money.
  - B** The technology for speech-recognition systems is constantly improving.
  - C** Virtual personal assistants are an important achievement in talking computers.
  - D** The earliest speech-recognition systems had limited capabilities.
- 

**12** The author's main purpose in writing this selection is to —

- F** describe the history of and advances in speech-recognition technology
  - G** share concerns about problems with speech-recognition technology
  - H** suggest that consumers rely too much on speech-recognition technology
  - J** explain how speech-recognition technology understands human language
- 

**13** Which sentence from the selection best explains why some people may prefer human-to-human communication?

- A** *Despite the efficiency of these systems, many people find them impersonal, stilted, and sometimes frustrating.*
- B** *Even the advanced human-machine interfaces used today are unable to trick the judge consistently into thinking a computer is a human.*
- C** *Simply put, the reason is that human beings rely on more than words to produce utterances and derive meaning from them.*
- D** *While the potential for spontaneous communication between a human and a machine may seem exciting, this possibility concerns some people.*

- 14** The author organizes the information in the selection mainly by —
- F** explaining the development of speech-recognition technology over time
  - G** describing advancements in speech-recognition technology as well as some concerns about it
  - H** providing details about the technical processes that computers use to understand speech and construct a response
  - J** comparing the ways humans and computers interpret spoken language
- 

**15** Which sentence from the selection reflects the author’s opinion?

- A** *Today many voice systems can understand language when spoken at a normal conversational rate.*
- B** *Others fear that machines will take over functions that were traditionally performed by humans, such as customer service.*
- C** *This digital trail may lead to data mining, or the collection of large quantities of personal data.*
- D** *For now, however, the continuing evolution of speech-recognition software is thrilling to behold.*

Read the next two selections. Then choose the best answer to each question.

## Starting from Scratch

- 1 When we pulled in the gravel driveway, Grandpa Joe was weeding his garden. He stood up, brushed off his knees, and greeted us with wide-open arms. In his muddy work gloves, rumpled jeans, and lime-green garden shoes, he looked nothing like the refined grandfather I remembered. The ultraprofessional bank president who loved numbers had retired and let his hair run wild. I hadn't seen him since he sold his house in the suburbs, and I wasn't expecting him to look so different.
- 2 After the hugs and kisses, Grandpa couldn't wait to show off his garden. Mom reminded him that she was just dropping me off and that she had to get back for Jessica's recital, but Grandpa went on pointing out his almost-ripe tomatoes, complaining about the rabbits eating his lettuce, and lauding homegrown produce. The man who had been preoccupied for decades with interest rates now cared only about organic gardening.
- 3 It worried Mom, the idea of Grandpa alone in that old cottage in the middle of nowhere. That was the real reason I was there. So I could report back.
- 4 Once Mom was gone, Grandpa turned to me and said, "Now, Anthony, if I remember correctly, you like pasta with pesto sauce." I eagerly nodded. It was true. The grocery store by our house had the best pesto sauce. "That's perfect!" Grandpa said. "We'll make some. Just look how my basil is coming up."
- 5 We broke off some basil, pulled up some garlic, and then drove 15 miles to the nearest co-op grocer, where Grandpa bought parmesan cheese, pine nuts, and olive oil. I spotted some ready-made pesto sauce but didn't mention it.
- 6 "Do we need pasta?" I asked.
- 7 "No," Grandpa replied proudly. "I make my own now."
- 8 On the drive home Grandpa asked, "What's the point of having a *nonno* if he never makes you a big home-cooked meal?"
- 9 *Nonno*—Italian for "grandpa." I had never called him that. Even though he often talked about how his parents had come to the United States from Italy, I had never really thought of him as particularly Italian.
- 10 "My parents made everything from scratch, like in the old country," he said. "But I never seemed to have the time to cook when I was working full-time. Fortunately, your mom liked sauce from a jar when she was a kid." He winked at me.
- 11 Grandpa had printouts of recipes he had pulled from the Internet. First he mixed eggs and flour into dough, and then he cranked the dough through a pasta maker over and over until he thought it was perfect. Then we got started on the pesto. While he cleaned the basil leaves, I grated the parmesan. It wore

out my wrist, but when I was finally done, I had a beautiful pile of cheese. Then Grandpa showed me how to dice the garlic cloves. He put all the ingredients in a blender that looked like it hadn't been touched in decades, poured in some olive oil, and let it grind away. When it was finished, it wasn't all smooth and creamy like the stuff from the grocery store. But I figured brown and clumpy must be more authentically Italian. Then Grandpa dropped his homemade pasta into boiling water.

12 When everything was ready, he proudly served me a heaping helping. I twirled up a forkful while he watched. I stuck it in my mouth and . . . it was just awful. The garlic overpowered my senses, and I thought I might choke. The pasta was gooey—actually, gluey.

13 "So," Grandpa said, his eyes sparkling, "what do you think?"

14 Before answering, I thought about our day. The garden, the shopping trip, the prep work, the embarrassing stories he shared about Mom that I stored away for later use. "I . . . I . . . love it, Nonno!" I said.

15 Then his face broke into a smile so warm that I was sure I hadn't told him a lie.

# Homemade Hot Sauce

by Nancy Mercado

Mother goes out on the hunt  
in search of prime specimens  
little red peppers  
some green  
5 Her market of choice  
a vegetable post by the side of the road  
Year after year you can find  
the old man there  
under a perennial baking sun  
10 his makeshift market in the wind  
Mother slowly stalks the produce  
scrutinizes the baby bananas  
pores over the *vianda*<sup>1</sup>  
pauses to ask if I'd like her  
15 to cook some for dinner  
then analyzes the *aguacates*<sup>2</sup>  
turning them over  
squeezing them lightly as they rest  
in the palm of her wrinkled hand  
20 finally she comes up on them  
chubby as plum tomatoes  
their skins shiny  
smooth as plastic  
their fiery nature screaming  
25 from inside glad sandwich bags  
where they hang on a tree

Back home mother  
patiently washes each one  
grinds up spices with her  
30 wooden mortar and pestle  
Pounds with such force  
the hanging pictures  
over the dinner table  
all dance to her cooking drum  
35 And when her concert has ended  
she packs them into  
an old vinegar bottle  
adds a fresh splash of vinegar to the mix  
then promptly places  
40 her concoction outdoors to ferment  
under a Puerto Rican sun

"Homemade Hot Sauce" is reprinted with permission of "Looking Out, Looking In," edited by William Luis (© Arte Publico Press—University of Houston).

<sup>1</sup>A *vianda* is a starchy root, like a sweet potato or yucca.

<sup>2</sup>*Aguacates* are avocados.

**Use “Starting from Scratch” (pp. 12–13) to answer questions 16–20. Then fill in the answers on your answer document.**

- 16** Which phrase from paragraph 1 best serves as an antonym context clue for the word refined?
- F** *weeding his garden*
  - G** *who loved numbers*
  - H** *let his hair run wild*
  - J** *sold his house*
- 

- 17** Paragraphs 1 through 3 are important to the story because they establish that Anthony —
- A** prefers talking to the serious Grandpa he has always known
  - B** is surprised to learn about Grandpa’s change in behavior
  - C** thinks that Mom should not worry about Grandpa’s new activities
  - D** wants Grandpa to teach him how to maintain a garden
- 

- 18** In paragraph 5, Anthony chooses not to mention the ready-made pesto most likely because he —
- F** believes that Grandpa’s homemade pesto will be more flavorful
  - G** realizes that Grandpa is excited about making homemade pesto
  - H** thinks it does not look as good as the kind he usually buys at the grocery store
  - J** knows that using a ready-made pesto means he would not get to spend time with Grandpa

**19** By telling the story from the first-person point of view, the author helps the reader understand —

- A** how Grandpa feels about living by himself in the old cottage
  - B** why Grandpa’s life is different from that of his parents
  - C** why Anthony enjoys Grandpa’s cooking despite the taste
  - D** how all the characters feel about their Italian heritage
- 

**20** What can the reader conclude about Grandpa from his actions in the story?

- F** He regrets his career working as a banker.
- G** He misses living and working in the suburbs.
- H** He wants to reconnect with his Italian roots.
- J** He wishes his daughter would cook Italian food for him.

Use "Homemade Hot Sauce" (p. 14) to answer questions 21–25. Then fill in the answers on your answer document.

21 Read this information about the origin of the word perennial.

from Latin *per-*, meaning "throughout," + *annus*, meaning "year"

This information helps the reader determine that the word perennial in line 9 means —

- A not measurable
- B highly desirable
- C not easily avoided
- D continually present

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22 In the first stanza, the poet uses the metaphor of a hunt to emphasize that Mother is —

- F eager to finish her shopping and begin preparing the hot sauce
- G competing with other shoppers at the market for the best produce
- H determined to find just the right peppers to use in her hot sauce
- J skillful at combining many different ingredients in her recipes

---

23 The words "patiently," "pounds," and "promptly" in the second stanza highlight Mother's —

- A desire to improve
- B devotion to her task
- C need for assistance
- D eagerness to finish her work

**24** The poet uses present tense throughout the poem to convey that —

- F** the speaker wants to visit the market again soon
  - G** the speaker wishes she were young again
  - H** the memory is vivid to the speaker
  - J** the memory makes the speaker feel childlike
- 

**25** Based on the details in the poem, the reader can conclude that Mother —

- A** takes making hot sauce for her family seriously
- B** spends the entire day making hot sauce
- C** makes hot sauce for her family every day
- D** wants her daughter to learn to make hot sauce

Use "Starting from Scratch" and "Homemade Hot Sauce" to answer questions 26–30. Then fill in the answers on your answer document.

26 In what way are the topics of the story and the poem **similar**?

- F Both describe how to select a variety of ingredients when planning a meal.
  - G Both highlight that young people know less about preparing food than adults.
  - H Both show that homemade food tastes better than ready-made food.
  - J Both provide details about preparing food in a traditional way.
- 

27 How does Anthony in the story **differ** from the speaker in the poem?

- A Anthony is amused by Grandpa's actions, while the speaker in the poem is concerned about Mother's behavior.
  - B Anthony is thankful for Grandpa's efforts, while the speaker in the poem seems indifferent to Mother's work.
  - C Anthony is surprised that Grandpa is cooking, while the speaker in the poem expects Mother to act the way she does.
  - D Anthony is encouraging of Grandpa's new interests, while the speaker in the poem worries about Mother's traditional ways.
- 

28 Unlike Grandpa in the story, Mother in the poem —

- F prepares the hot sauce to be used for dinner that night
- G makes her homemade sauce with freshly picked produce
- H uses special equipment to make her homemade sauce
- J seems very experienced at preparing her own sauce

**29** The ending of the story and the ending of the poem are **similar** because both Anthony and the speaker —

- A** wish they could help their family member perform a routine chore
  - B** take comfort in observing a family member doing something with love
  - C** learn how to do something interesting by watching a family member
  - D** understand the significance of a specific cultural tradition
- 

**30** Grandpa in the story and Mother in the poem would most likely agree that —

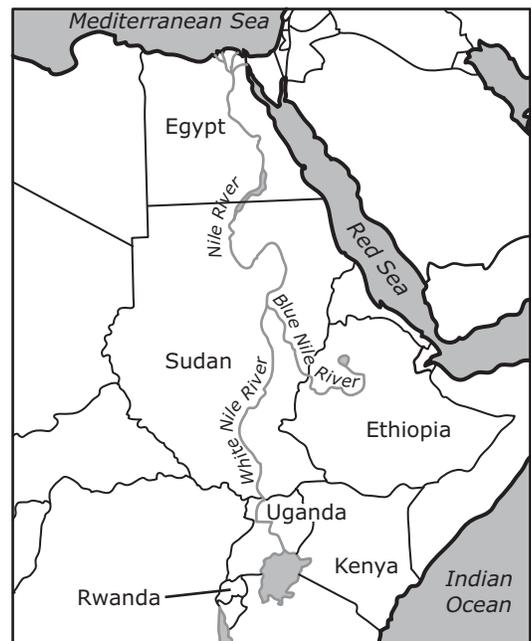
- F** cooking meals with others takes too much time
- G** living in the country is better than living in the city
- H** making food from scratch can be very satisfying
- J** doing something the old way is always better

Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question. Then fill in the answer on your answer document.

## Adventuring on the Nile

- 1 "It has rapids, waterfalls, jungle, canyons, deserts, hippos, crocs, long flat beautiful sections, huge beautiful sandbars," Pasquale Scaturro says. "There is no other river in the world that can compare." The river that Scaturro is describing has been the subject of human curiosity and a home to civilizations for thousands of years: the Nile. The river has long been a significant agricultural and transportation fixture in northeastern Africa, crucial to the people who depend on it. And yet no one had ever made the journey from its beginning to its end by boat. Scaturro is a geophysicist and a world-famous guide and explorer. His job in oil and gas exploration and his love of adventure have led him on expeditions in some of the wildest, roughest parts of the world. In 2004 he and filmmaker Gordon Brown completed the first-ever descent of the Nile River, from its headwaters in Ethiopia to its mouth at the Mediterranean Sea. Their journey was documented in the IMAX film *Mystery of the Nile*.
- 2 The Nile is the longest river in the world. When including the headwaters of both the Blue Nile and the White Nile, the Nile measures more than 4,100 miles. The White Nile begins in Rwanda, and the Blue Nile begins in Ethiopia; they meet in Sudan to form the Nile River, which flows through Egypt to the Mediterranean Sea. The river covers terrain that includes mountains, deserts, gorges, lakes, valleys, dams, waterfalls, and large cities. It flows through the largest lake in Africa; it winds through capital cities; it grazes ancient cities as well as world-renowned antiquities such as the pyramids.

- 3 Until Scaturro and Brown's expedition in 2004, no one had successfully traveled the length of the river beginning from the Blue Nile, which is often considered the source of the Nile because it provides more than 85 percent of the water in the Nile River. Scaturro and Brown launched their watercraft from the Springs of Sakala, the origins of the Blue Nile in the Ethiopian highlands, in late December 2003. Their watercraft included two 16-foot inflatable rafts and a two-person kayak. A small support crew, which at times included a journalist, an archaeologist, a photographer, and a hydrologist, joined the men and aided with some of the planning. But the bulk of the navigating, paddling, and filming—Brown was shooting their adventure with a 70-pound IMAX camera—fell to Scaturro and Brown.



- 4 The pair traveled 3,250 miles in four months. During their journey they encountered disease-carrying mosquitoes, sand storms, extreme heat, and armed bandits. Several stretches of the river pass through areas of unrest or civil war. Many sections of the Nile have life-threatening rapids, leading some to

liken the river to Mount Everest in terms of adventure and danger. Scaturro and Brown’s boats flipped in the white water more than once. A crocodile attacked Brown’s kayak and took a bite out of his oar. In several areas the river proved impassible, and the team was forced to briefly portage their boats or send the boats down dangerous waterfalls or rapids unmanned while they bypassed the area on foot.

- 5 But for all the dangers they encountered, they also met with awe-inspiring sights and experiences. Scaturro noted in his journal that for much of their time on the Nile in Sudan, they saw “absolutely not a single other tourist, adventurer, traveler, or any other westerner. . . . Basically, we have had the entire Nile River to ourselves. What an adventure.”
- 6 From the white-water gorges of Ethiopia to the desert plains of Sudan to the urban pollution near heavily populated Egyptian cities, Scaturro and Brown experienced the best and the worst of the Nile. Their journey revealed to them that the Nile is a unifying thread of civilization in northeastern Africa. All told, the Nile and its main tributaries flow through 11 African countries: Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda—countries with diverse cultures, beliefs, and environments that are all connected by the mighty river. “One theme we hope this expedition highlights is that the Nile brings people of different faiths and cultures . . . together,” Brown says.



Scaturro and Brown in Alexandria, Egypt,  
in 2004

© Amro Maraghi/AFP/Getty Images

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- 31** Scaturro and Brown filmed their adventure most likely because they —
- A** believed their journey down the Nile River would bring them more fame
  - B** hoped it would help promote efforts to clean and protect the areas along the Nile River
  - C** wanted people around the world to appreciate the beauty and diversity of the Nile River
  - D** thought the publicity would encourage more tourists to visit the Nile River
- 

- 32** Which detail from paragraph 2 supports the idea that the Nile River spans diverse areas?
- F** The Nile River is the longest river in the world, measuring about 4,100 miles in length.
  - G** The White Nile begins in Rwanda, and the Blue Nile begins in Ethiopia.
  - H** The two main tributaries of the Nile River meet in Sudan to form one river.
  - J** The Nile River flows through cities as well as remote deserts and mountain regions.
- 

- 33** Based on paragraphs 3 and 4, what can the reader infer about navigating the Nile River?
- A** Many explorers have failed in their attempts to complete the trip.
  - B** It is a challenging endeavor even for experienced adventurers.
  - C** Preparing for the journey can take many months of planning.
  - D** It is best to make the expedition with a small crew.
- 

- 34** Based on paragraph 5, the reader can infer that for Scaturro and Brown —
- F** the satisfaction of traveling the Nile River outweighed the dangers it presented
  - G** the Nile River provided a place to get away from modern life
  - H** the journey along the Nile River was a challenging test of their survival skills
  - J** the sights along the Nile River were better experienced on film than in person

**35** The details in paragraph 6 support the idea that —

- A** the Nile River and its main tributaries flow through many African countries
  - B** population growth along the Nile has caused the river to become polluted
  - C** the Nile River serves as a shared foundation for many diverse African cultures
  - D** the largest cities along the Nile River are located in Egypt
- 

**36** The map of the Nile River Valley is included in the selection to —

- F** indicate why the Blue Nile is considered the primary source of the river
  - G** show the long and winding course of the river
  - H** emphasize that the river is important to all the countries it flows through
  - J** highlight the most popular locations along the river
- 

**37** The author organizes the information in the selection mainly by —

- A** explaining why Scaturro and Brown wanted to explore the Nile River and then giving details about how they prepared for the journey
- B** comparing the Nile River with other rivers around the world and then discussing Scaturro and Brown’s journey along the Blue Nile
- C** stating that the Nile River is challenging to navigate and then sharing details about the difficulties Scaturro and Brown encountered on their journey
- D** providing background information about the Nile River and then describing Scaturro and Brown’s expedition

- 38** The author’s main purpose for writing this selection is to —
- F** explain how the Nile River brings together a variety of cultures
  - G** describe the first expedition to travel the full length of the Nile River
  - H** discuss the dangers that travelers have encountered along the Nile River
  - J** provide information about the history of the Nile River
- 

**39** What is the best summary of the selection?

- A** Explorers Pasquale Scaturro and Gordon Brown traveled the length of the Nile River by boat. On their trip they saw mountains, deserts, gorges, waterfalls, and large cities. Their journey began in Ethiopia and ended in Egypt at the Mediterranean Sea. Some of the areas they traveled through were unsafe because of the harsh rapids, extreme heat, and hostile wildlife.
- B** The Nile River flows through 11 African countries. The river is the world’s longest and has been important to many civilizations for thousands of years. In 2004 explorers Pasquale Scaturro and Gordon Brown paddled the river and made a film about their trip. Sometimes their boats flipped in the water, and they were even attacked by a crocodile.
- C** In 2004, Pasquale Scaturro and Gordon Brown became the first people to travel the entire Nile River by boat. Their 3,250-mile journey on the longest river in the world took four months. Though awed by the river’s beauty, they also endured menacing conditions. Their trip helped them understand the significance of the Nile River to many African cultures.
- D** A geophysicist and explorer named Pasquale Scaturro paddled the Nile River with filmmaker Gordon Brown in 2004. The river measures more than 4,100 miles and flows past a variety of landscapes as well as ancient cities and the Egyptian pyramids. An IMAX film was made about their journey.

Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question. Then fill in the answer on your answer document.

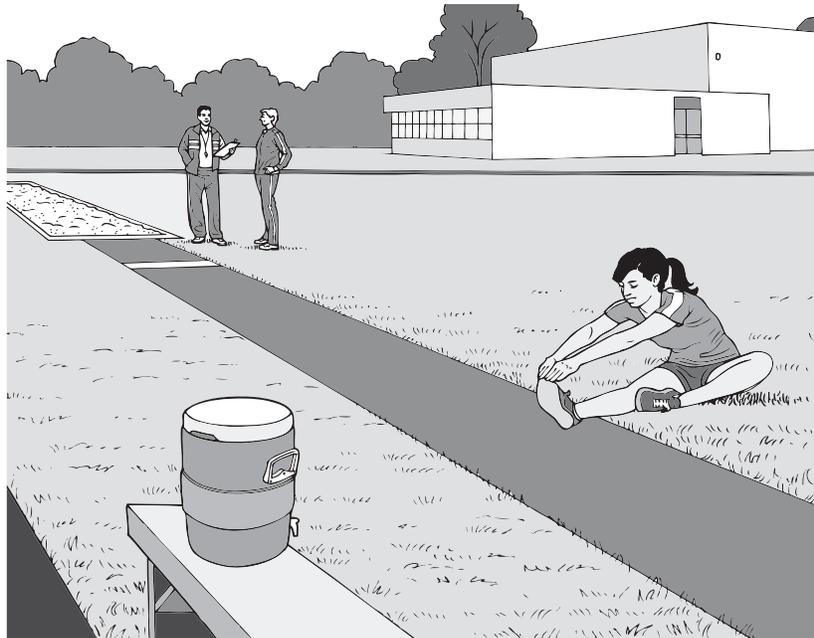
## False Start

- 1 "Am I done yet?" Teresa pleaded as she crossed the finish line.
- 2 "That set of sprints was O.K.," Coach Wilson said. "Sprints will help strengthen the muscles in your legs so that you can jump farther."
- 3 "But I was born to do the long jump. My instinct is to jump," Teresa said as she sat on a bench. "When I'm on the Olympic team, you'll see what I mean."
- 4 "Until then, I need you to do another set," Coach Wilson responded.
- 5 Teresa changed the subject. "When am I going to meet the Olympic coach you know at the training facility in Grand Prairie? I've been breaking my own record since sixth grade. The kids in this area are no competition for me."
- 6 Coach Wilson paused for a moment. "I'm not sure you're ready, Teresa. Athletes from all over Texas train at that facility."
- 7 "I know I'm ready. Please arrange a tryout," Teresa begged. "I'm sure my mom can take me this weekend."
- 8 "I'll call this week," Coach Wilson conceded. "But just know that a tryout doesn't guarantee anything."
- 9 When Teresa arrived home, she told her mother about the tryout.
- 10 "Are you sure you're ready?" Teresa's mother asked. "It might be a good idea to practice with Coach Wilson more before we make a trip to Grand Prairie."
- 11 "But this is my big chance!" Teresa exclaimed.
- \* \* \*
- 12 As soon as Teresa arrived at the facility in Grand Prairie, the trainer Coach Jennings escorted Teresa to an outdoor track. As they approached the long-jump area, Teresa saw two girls taking turns jumping into the sandpit. "Finally, some real competition," she thought. An assistant coach measured the girls' results and recorded them on a clipboard. Teresa began stretching.
- 13 "Teresa, you're up!" Coach Jennings announced. Teresa noticed the other girls staring at her. She stood on the runway and thought, "This is your time to shine." She sprinted toward the sandpit, sprang into the air, and landed in the sand.
- 14 The assistant coach glanced over his clipboard to where Teresa had landed and then turned away without measuring her jump. The two girls mumbled to each other and began walking toward a water station.

15 "Why don't you stretch more and then do your second jump," Coach Jennings said flatly.

16 "Sure, Coach," Teresa said, but she could tell that Coach Jennings was not impressed. "I just need to stretch," she thought.

17 While Teresa stretched, Coach Jennings spoke quietly with the assistant coach. Teresa tried not to listen but couldn't help overhearing a few phrases: ". . . she's never competed at state . . . a favor for my college friend, Brenda Wilson."



18 "A favor?" Teresa thought.

19 Another girl approached the long-jump runway. Coach Jennings waved her on. With a burst of speed, the girl sprinted down the runway like a bolt of lightning and leaped into the sandpit.

20 "6.27 meters!" the assistant coach yelled.

21 "6.27 meters?" Teresa thought in disbelief. She held her school's record, but that was barely more than 5 meters. Teresa suddenly realized why no one had measured her jump.

22 "That's decent for a practice jump," Coach Jennings told the girl, "but next time I want to see more control in your final stride."

23 The girl nodded and took off running around the track.

24 Coach Jennings turned to Teresa. "Are you ready for your second jump?"

25 Teresa thought for a minute. Instead of walking to the end of the runway, she walked to the sandpit. "Thank you for meeting with me, Coach Jennings, but I don't want to waste any more of your time."

\* \* \*

26 In the car Teresa sat with her arms folded. "I can't believe Coach Wilson didn't warn me."

27 "She tried, but you refused to listen," Teresa's mother said calmly.

28 "What makes you say that?" Teresa asked.

29 "Because Coach Wilson called me before she called Coach Jennings. She wanted to make sure I could drive you." Teresa's mother sighed. "And she wanted to prepare me for what to expect."

30 Teresa rolled her eyes.

31 "We both want you to be a successful long jumper," Teresa's mother continued, "but we also want you to be realistic."

32 "I guess," Teresa said, staring at the floor of the car.

33 "She's expecting you at practice on Monday."

34 Teresa nodded. She gazed out the window as she left Grand Prairie and thought, "I'll be back here soon."

- 40** Coach Wilson calls Teresa’s mother before the tryout most likely to —
- F** inform her that Teresa’s tryout is probably going to be unsuccessful
  - G** tell her that Teresa will have to adjust to working with a new coach
  - H** persuade Teresa’s mother to talk Teresa out of attending the tryout
  - J** give Teresa’s mother directions to the training facility in Grand Prairie
- 

- 41** Read paragraph 3.

*"But I was born to do the long jump. My instinct is to jump," Teresa said as she sat on a bench. "When I'm on the Olympic team, you'll see what I mean."*

Teresa’s comments influence the theme of the story because they show that she —

- A** does not know a lot about long jumping
  - B** thinks that her coach does not give her useful advice
  - C** believes that she is a better long jumper than she actually is
  - D** feels as though she has to prove her abilities to others
- 
- 42** Which event in the story causes Teresa to reevaluate her talent as a long jumper?
- F** Teresa watches another girl jump a long distance.
  - G** Teresa’s mother suggests that she practice more.
  - H** Teresa’s first jump does not impress Coach Jennings.
  - J** Teresa declines to take her second jump.

- 43** The dialogue between Teresa and her mother after the tryout indicates that her mother —
- A** believes that Teresa can make the Olympic team if she practices enough
  - B** knows that taking Teresa to the tryouts was a waste of time
  - C** thinks it was necessary to trick Teresa into taking long-jump practice seriously
  - D** wants Teresa to be honest with herself about her skill as a long jumper
- 

- 44** The story's third-person limited point of view gives the reader insight into —
- F** the doubts Teresa's mother has about Teresa attending the tryout
  - G** Coach Jennings's thoughts about Teresa's jump at the tryout
  - H** the feelings Teresa has about her performance at the tryout
  - J** Coach Wilson's hesitation about sending Teresa to the tryout









**STAAR  
GRADE 8  
Reading  
April 2018**



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