Skills Test in Reading

Directions: Read the following passages and answer the questions that follow.

Use the following passage to answer questions 1–7.

Sharks have layers of sharp teeth in their mighty jaws that allow them to cut through a fish's bones or a shellfish's hard shell. The shark will eat almost every creature found in the ocean, from crabs and turtles to seals and penguins. If an animal is too big, a shark will simply tear it into smaller chunks before eating it.

This ancient fish has been patrolling Earth's waters for more than 400 million years and can now be found in all the planet's seas, from the surface to a depth of below a mile. Species of sharks can be massive, with a length of up to 46 feet, and some can be swift, with bursts of speed of up to 30 miles per hour.

Despite all the impressive physical characteristics of the shark that would make it seem especially treacherous to humans, on average fewer than 5 people in the world are killed each year by sharks—fewer than are killed by wasps or lightning. By contrast, an estimated 100 million sharks are killed by fishermen each year. In addition to this overfishing, sharks suffer from habitat loss due to coastal development and the impact of water pollution; some species are facing severe population decline as a result. Many people share a groundless fear of shark attacks; perhaps they should instead be fearful of losing one of the planet's most remarkable creatures to extinction.

1. Which statement, if it were true, would most significantly strengthen the author's argument?
   a. The smallest shark in the world reaches only a length of about 8 inches when fully grown.
   b. Of the nearly 400 species of sharks in the world, only four have been known to be dangerous to humans.
   c. Swimming in a group is safer than swimming alone because sharks are less likely to attack an individual.
   d. Other than humans, sharks have very few natural predators.
   e. The bull shark, known for its aggressive and often unpredictable nature, can often be found in shallow waters near beaches.

2. In the context of the passage, groundless (line 26) can be replaced with which word to incur the smallest alteration in meaning?
   a. sound
   b. aquatic
   c. terrifying
   d. justifiable
   e. unwarranted

3. The author's attitude toward sharks could be best described as
   a. reverential.
   b. frightened.
   c. ambivalent.
   d. quarrelsome.
   e. cautionary.
4. Which sentence best describes the organization of the two paragraphs of the passage?
   a. A detailed description of the creature is provided, and then common perceptions of it are supported.
   b. The evolution and history of an animal is illustrated, and then its present-day status is defined.
   c. The intimidating physical characteristics are listed, and then a defense of the creature is given.
   d. A series of harmless attributes are defined, and then a list of hazardous characteristics is described.
   e. The distinguishing features of an organism are provided, and then those features are described in further detail.

5. Which creature shares a similar relationship to humans as sharks to humans?
   a. killer whales, also called orcas, because they reside in all the oceans and lack natural predators
   b. frogs, because, despite their attractive appearance, they are among the most toxic animals on Earth
   c. caterpillars, because they go through a series of life stages during their complete metamorphosis
   d. deer, because they generally have a fear of humans and frequently will run away when approached
   e. snakes, because many people fear them despite the fact that very few species are venomous

6. Which detail from the passage would best support the idea that sharks should benefit from the protection of a conservation bill from Congress?
   a. More people are killed each year by wasps or lightning than by shark attacks.
   b. The shark will eat almost every creature found in the ocean.
   c. The shark can be found in all the planet’s seas.
   d. Some species are facing severe population loss.
   e. Many people share a groundless fear of shark attacks.

7. Which sentence from the passage contains an opinion from the author?
   a. “Sharks have layers . . . hard shell.”
   b. “The shark will . . . and penguins.”
   c. “The ancient fish . . . a mile.”
   d. “By contrast, an . . . each year.”
   e. “Many people share . . . to extinction.”

Use the following double bar graph to answer question 8.

![Number of Big Cats at Local Zoo](image)

- **Number of Big Cats at Local Zoo**
- **Number**
- **Male**
- **Female**
- **Lion**
- **Tiger**
- **Leopard**
- **Cheetah**
8. Which conclusion can be made from the information presented in the double bar graph above?
   a. Lions are the most popular big cats at the local zoo.
   b. The zoo has an equal number of female cheetahs and female lions.
   c. Tigers are more difficult to contain in captivity.
   d. The zoo has more male leopards than female leopards.
   e. The cheetah is the fastest animal on Earth.

9. Which organization best describes the structure of the passage?
   a. order of importance
   b. compare and contrast
   c. problem and solution
   d. classification
   e. chronological order

10. The passage is primarily focused on
    a. the means and methods for the exploration of New Zealand.
    b. the explorers Abel Tasman and James Cook.
    c. the initial European discovery of New Zealand.
    d. the first capital of New Zealand.
    e. the early history of New Zealand.

11. Which conclusion can be determined with certainty based on the information in the passage?
    a. The Maori people were living in New Zealand by AD 1000.
    b. The Dutch found no financial incentives to return to New Zealand.
    c. The Europeans and the Maori people have enjoyed a long, peaceful relationship.
    d. James Cook made significant scientific discoveries on his voyages to New Zealand.
    e. Russell is still the capital of New Zealand today.

Use the following passage to answer questions 12–16.

From early on in his administration, Abraham Lincoln was pressured by abolitionists and radical Republicans to issue an Emancipation Proclamation. In principle, Lincoln approved, but he postponed action against slavery until he believed he had wider support from the American public. The passage of the Second Confiscation Act by Congress on July 17, 1862, which freed the slaves of everyone in rebellion against the government, consequently provided the
desired signal. Not only had Congress relieved
the administration of considerable strain with
its limited initiative on emancipation, it dem-
onstrated an increasing public abhorrence
toward slavery. Lincoln had already drafted
what he termed his “Preliminary Proclama-
tion.” He read his initial draft of the Emancipa-
tion Proclamation to Secretaries William H.
Seward and Gideon Welles on July 13, 1862.
For a moment, both secretaries were speechless.
Quickly collecting his thoughts, Seward sug-
gested possible anarchy in the South and for-
egn intervention, but with Welles apparently
too confused to respond, Lincoln let the
matter drop.
Nine days later, Lincoln raised the issue in
a regularly scheduled Cabinet meeting. The
reaction was mixed. Secretary of War Edwin M.
Stanton, correctly interpreting the Proclama-
tion as a military measure designed to deprive
the Confederacy of slave labor and bring addi-
tional men into the Union Army, advocated its
immediate release. Conversely, Montgomery
Blair, the Postmaster General, foresaw defeat in
the fall elections. Attorney General Edward
Bates, a conservative, opposed civil and political
equality for blacks but gave his qualified sup-
port. Fortunately, President Lincoln only
wanted the advice of his Cabinet on the style of
the Proclamation, not its substance. The course
was set. The Cabinet meeting of September 22,
1862, resulted in the political and literary
refinement of the July draft, and on January 1,
1863, Lincoln composed the final Emancipa-
tion Proclamation. In the end, it was the
crowning achievement of his administration.

12. The passage suggests which of the following
about Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation?
a. Abolitionists did not support such an
executive order.
b. The draft proclamation was unanimously
well received by Lincoln’s cabinet.
c. Congressional actions influenced Lincoln
and encouraged him to issue it.
d. The proclamation was not part of a military
strategy.
e. The first draft needed to be edited because
Lincoln made numerous grammatical errors.

13. The description of the reaction of Secretaries
Seward and Welles to Lincoln’s draft proclama-
tion in lines 20–25 is used to illustrate
a. Lincoln’s lack of political acumen.
b. that Lincoln’s advisors did not anticipate his
plan.
c. the incompetence of Lincoln’s advisors.
d. Seward and Welles’s disappointment that
Lincoln did not free all slaves at that time.
e. that most members of Lincoln’s
administration were abolitionists.

14. In line 37, qualified most nearly means
a. adept.
b. capable.
c. limited.
d. eligible.
e. certified.

15. The author’s attitude to the issuing of the
Emancipation Proclamation is one of
a. informed appreciation.
b. reluctant admiration.
c. ambiguous acceptance.
d. conflicted disapproval.
e. personal dislike.
16. Which word or phrase from the passage helps illustrate that Lincoln’s proposed proclamation was not universally supported?
   a. consequently (line 10)
   b. not only (line 11)
   c. conversely (line 33)
   d. fortunately (line 38)
   e. in the end (line 45)

17. Which is NOT suggested by the passage as a threat to the northern spotted owl?
   a. logging
   b. scientific research
   c. forest fires
   d. climate change
   e. barred owls

18. Which sentence from the passage represents an opinion rather than a fact?
   b. “In 1991 the . . . owls live.”
   c. “Barred owls are . . . hunting grounds.”
   d. “Some track the . . . eggs hatch.”
   e. “Given all these . . . owl species.”

19. What purpose does the phrase Now, though (lines 7 and 8) serve in the context of the passage?
   a. to contrast the author’s opinion with the actual facts
   b. to reverse the decision that a species must be protected
   c. to question the reasonability of a government bill
   d. to contrast an earlier protection with current threats
   e. to compare a variety of threats to an endangered species

20. Which sentence provides the best summary of the reading selection?
   a. The northern spotted owl suffers from a loss of habitat.
   b. The northern spotted owl faces severe threats and must be protected.
   c. Scientists are struggling to identify ways to protect the northern spotted owl.
   d. The northern spotted owl used to be common in the Pacific Northwest.
   e. The northern spotted owl is an endangered species.
21. Which sentence from the reading selection provides the least amount of support for the main idea?

a. However, these owls live in old-growth forest, and much of their habitat has been lost to logging and natural disasters.
b. Now, though, the owls face a new threat—competition with the barred owl.
c. Barred owls are larger and more aggressive, and they scare the spotted owls away from nesting and hunting grounds.
d. Some track the owl nests to monitor when their eggs hatch.
e. In addition to the myriad other dangers, the northern spotted owl is also threatened by climate change and competition with other birds of prey.

Use this passage to answer question 22.

Paradoxical as it may seem, Theodore Roosevelt was once of America’s most well-known hunters and also one of the pioneers of the twentieth-century environmental movement. A passionate game hunter, Roosevelt took frequent trips to the Dakota Badlands. As U.S. president at the start of the century, Roosevelt enlarged and expanded the national park system, designating large swathes of the American West as territories protected from development.

22. According to the passage, Theodore Roosevelt

a. established the U.S. national park system.
b. was responsible for the conservation of large amounts of land.
c. killed some of the largest animals on the North American continent.
d. was not a successful president because of his passion for hunting.
e. initiated significant climate change legislation.

Use the following passage to answer questions 23–25.

If you frequently feel drowsy during the day or fall asleep within five minutes of lying down, you may have sleep deprivation. Microsleeps, very brief episodes of sleep in an otherwise awake person, are another mark of sleep deprivation. The widespread practice of “burning the candle at both ends” in Western industrialized societies has created so much sleep deprivation that what is really abnormal sleepiness is now almost the norm.

Studies prove that sleep deprivation is dangerous. Sleep-deprived people tested with a driving simulator perform as badly as or worse than those who are intoxicated. Driver fatigue is responsible for an estimated 100,000 motor vehicle accidents and 1,500 deaths each year. Since drowsiness is the brain’s last step before falling asleep, drowsy driving can often lead to disaster. The National Sleep Foundation says that if you have trouble keeping your eyes focused, can’t stop yawning, or can’t remember driving the last few miles, you are too drowsy to drive safely.

23. The primary purpose of the passage is to

a. offer preventive measures for sleep deprivation.
b. explain why sleeplessness has become a common state in Western cultures.
c. recommend the amount of sleep individuals need at different ages.
d. alert readers to the signs and risks of not getting enough sleep.
e. discuss the effects of alcohol on a sleep-deprived person
24. The author uses the phrase *burning the candle at both ends* (lines 6–7) most likely to refer to
   a. an unrelenting schedule that affords little rest.
   b. an ardent desire to achieve.
   c. the unavoidable conflagration that occurs when two forces oppose each other.
   d. a latent period before a conflict or collapse.
   e. a state of extreme agitation.

25. In line 10, the term *norm* could be replaced with which of the following words to result in the most minimal change of meaning?
   a. outlier
   b. standard
   c. danger
   d. anomaly
   e. ideal

*Use the following passage to answer questions 26–32.*

1. The mounting conflict between the colonies and England in the 1760s and 1770s reinforced a growing conviction that Americans should be less dependent on their mother country for manufactures. The manufacture of homespun cloth was encouraged as a substitute for English imports. But manufacturing of cloth outside the household was associated with relief of the poor. Houses of Industry employed poor families at spinning for their daily bread.

   Such practices made many pre-Revolutionary Americans dubious about manufacturing. After independence there were a number of unsuccessful attempts to establish textile factories. Americans needed access to the British industrial innovations, but England had passed laws forbidding the export of machinery or the emigration of those who could operate it. Nevertheless, an English immigrant, Samuel Slater, introduced British cotton technology to America.

22. Slater had worked his way up from apprentice to overseer in an English factory.

23. Drawn by American bounties for the introduction of textile technology, he passed as a farmer and sailed for America with details of a revolutionary cloth-making machine committed to memory. In December 1790, he started the first permanent American cotton spinning mill in Rhode Island. Employing a workforce of nine children between the ages of seven and twelve, Slater successfully mechanized the carding and spinning processes.

24. A generation of millwrights and textile workers trained under Slater was the catalyst for the rapid proliferation of textile mills in the early nineteenth century. From Slater’s first mill, the industry spread across New England.

25. For two decades, before mills modeled after Francis Cabot Lowell’s factory system offered competition, the “Rhode Island System” of small, rural spinning mills set the tone for early industrialization.

26. The primary purpose of the passage is to
   a. account for the decline of rural America.
   b. contrast political views held by the British and the Americans.
   c. summarize British laws forbidding the export of industrial machinery.
   d. describe the introduction of textile mills in New England.
   e. make an argument in support of industrial development.
27. The passage refers to Houses of Industry (line 9) to illustrate
   a. a highly successful and early social welfare program.
   b. the perception of cloth production outside the home as a social welfare measure.
   c. the preference for the work of individual artisans over that of spinning machines.
   d. the first textile factory in the United States.
   e. the utilization of technological advances being made in England at the time.

28. It can be inferred from the passage that early American manufacturing was
   a. entirely beneficial.
   b. politically and economically necessary.
   c. symbolically undemocratic.
   d. environmentally destructive.
   e. spiritually corrosive.

29. The author most likely included the description of Slater's immigration to the American colonies (lines 24–28) primarily in order to
   a. demonstrate Slater's craftiness in evading British export laws.
   b. show the attraction of farming opportunities in the American colonies.
   c. explain the details of British manufacturing technologies.
   d. illustrate American efforts to block immigration to the colonies.
   e. describe the willingness of English factories to share knowledge with the colonies.

30. Lines 30–33 infer that Slater viewed child labor as
   a. an available workforce.
   b. a necessary evil.
   c. an unpleasant reality.
   d. an immoral institution.
   e. superior to adult labor.

31. The author implies that the catalyst (line 35) behind the spread of American textile mills in the early 1800s was
   a. Slater's invention of a groundbreaking cloth-making machine.
   b. the decline in the ideal of the self-sufficient American farm family.
   c. the expertise of the workforce trained in Slater's prototype mill.
   d. an increased willingness to employ child laborers.
   e. the support of British manufacturers who owned stock in American mills.

32. In line 39, modeled most nearly means
   a. posed.
   b. displayed.
   c. arranged.
   d. illustrated.
   e. fashioned.

Use the following passage to answer questions 33–35.

1. The running of the bulls, a practice where men and women test their bravado by dodging bulls rampaging through city streets, is one of the more famous Spanish traditions. The most
2. popular running of the bulls is held during the San Fermin Festival in Pamplona, Spain, where
3. a crowd of greater than a million people gathers to avoid the charging and observe the wild
4. event. The entertainment is not innocuous, however; each year several hundred people are
11 injured from the run, and 15 people have been
12 killed by bulls during the last century. On the
13 flipside, the Spanish La Tomatina festival offers
14 a much safer way to enjoy an incredibly unique
15 tradition. Held in the Spanish town of Buñol,
16 participants throw tomatoes at each other in a
17 massive food fight. For an hour, tens of thou-
18 sands of participants hurl up to 100 tons of
19 tomatoes, even swimming in the tomato paste.
20 There have been no reported casualties from La
21 Tomatina.

33. Which organization best describes the structure
   of the reading selection?
   a. classification
   b. compare and contrast
   c. problem and solution
   d. chronological order
   e. order of importance

34. In line 9, the word innocuous most nearly
   means
   a. dangerous.
   b. customary.
   c. harmless.
   d. fun.
   e. harmful.

35. For which reason did the author most likely
   include the last sentence of the passage?
   a. to compare personal experiences of two
      Spanish festivals
   b. to criticize the dangers of the misuse of food
      products
   c. to accentuate the dangers of a particular
      festival
   d. to downplay potentially grave concerns of
      one festival
   e. to contrast one festival’s safety with the
      dangers of another

Use the following passage to answer questions 36–38.

An ecosystem is a grouping of animals and
plants living in a specific region and interacting
with one another and with their physical envi-
ronment. Ecosystems include physical and
chemical components such as soils, water, and
nutrients. These components support the
organisms living in the ecosystem. Ecosystems
can also be thought of as the interactions
among all organisms in a given habitat. These
organisms may range from large animals to
microscopic bacteria and may work together in
various ways. For example, one species may
serve as food for another. Human activities,
such as housing developments and trash dis-
posal, can greatly harm or even destroy local
ecosystems. Proper ecosystem management is
crucial for the overall health and diversity of
our planet. We must find ways to protect local
ecosystems without stifling economic
development.

36. Which sentence best expresses the main idea of
   this passage?
   a. Our actions can have a great impact on our
      ecosystems.
   b. Ecosystems have been badly managed in the
      past.
   c. Humans must clean up their trash.
   d. Ecosystems interact with one another.
   e. Trash disposals can greatly harm local
      ecosystems.

37. Which relationship best describes the activities
   within an ecosystem?
   a. predator-prey relationships
   b. interactions among all members
   c. human-animal interactions
   d. human relationship with the environment
   e. destroyer-preserver relationships
38. The author of the reading selection would most likely define an ecosystem as
   a. a specific place.
   b. a community of plants and animals.
   c. a group of animals working together.
   d. a protected environment.
   e. a threatened setting.

Use the following passage to answer question 39.

It may be difficult to envision with today’s technologies and comforts, but the early European expeditions to the Americas were incredibly arduous; the journey took several months, during which time the travelers faced extreme isolation, limited supplies due to space constraints, and a somewhat mysterious concept of what to expect upon arrival.

39. Which journey would be most similar to the early European expeditions to the Americas?
   a. a luxury cruise across the Atlantic
   b. a solo skydive
   c. an unmanned probe to Venus
   d. a jet flight to Asia
   e. a manned trip to Mars

40. Which conclusion is supported from the information presented in the double bar graph?
   a. The year in which Hickory Hills Farm produced the most eggs was 2006.
   b. Hickory Hills Farm makes more money selling organic eggs than non-organic eggs.
   c. More customers are buying organic produce than ever before.
   d. The first year that Hickory Hills Farm produced more organic eggs than non-organic eggs was 2010.
   e. Hickory Hills Farm will no longer be producing non-organic eggs by 2020.