

## Grade Eleven Sample Test Item—Reading

### Achievement Level: Standard Exceeded

Read the text and answer the questions.

#### **A Driving Force for Progress**

by Karen Bradley Cain

In 1913, Henry Ford put his future on the line—the assembly line, that is. He pioneered a new way to produce cars for the masses. Ford and his team followed four basic principles of mass production. First, they relied on standard, interchangeable parts. Second, work moved continuously, so one job flowed into the next. Third, they divided labor into a number of tasks performed by different workers. Fourth, they cut wasted time and effort.

Before this time, a car under construction stayed in one spot on the factory floor, while workers took turns doing different jobs until it was finished. Determined to speed up the process, Ford installed the industry's first moving assembly line at his plant in Highland Park, Michigan. He used conveyor belts to bring the work to the workers, who were stationed along the line with tools and parts. "Some men do one or two operations; others do more," he explained to the press. "The man who places the part does not fasten it. The man who puts in a bolt does not put on a nut; the man who puts on a nut does not tighten it."

His conviction that "everything must move" boosted Ford Motor Company's production and reduced its costs. In less than a year, assembly time for each car dropped from slightly more than 12 hours to 93 minutes. The price of a new Model T dropped, too, going from 850 dollars in 1908 to 390 dollars in 1915.

Meanwhile, Ford took dramatic steps to create more customers for his "motor car for the multitudes." On January 5, 1914, he announced the "Five-Dollar Day." Ford promised to pay eligible employees at least five dollars per day, more than twice the average wage earned by autoworkers at that time. He also cut the workday from nine to eight hours, enabling the factory to operate three eight-hour shifts.

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These moves prompted some to praise him as a humanitarian, while others condemned him as “a traitor to his class.” To Ford, however, they were simply good business decisions. He believed that giving employees a share of the profits made them work harder and smarter. Moreover, many workers spent their extra cash on low-priced Model Ts. Summing up his philosophy, Ford said, “There is one rule for the industrialist and that is: Make the best quality of goods possible at the lowest cost possible, paying the highest wages possible.”

Although such ideas may seem commonplace today, Ford’s attitudes and decisions sent shock waves throughout the world of the early 1900s. Manufacturers from England, Germany, and Russia studied and soon borrowed his methods. Sociologists began using the term “Fordism” to describe the cycle of mass production and mass consumption that was taking hold in the first quarter of the 20th century.

To many, he became a symbol of American ingenuity and innovation. He sought advice from both employees and experts. His openness to fresh ideas encouraged others to push the boundaries of science and business. The idea for Ford’s moving assembly line, for example, began with foreman William Klann and several other employees, who had seen something similar at a meatpacking plant in Chicago in 1912. The plant’s “disassembly line” consisted of overhead trolleys that carried animal carcasses to meat cutters at fixed stations. Each butcher performed a single task before the meat traveled to the next station.

Klann said, “If they can do it, we can do it.” Klann and his coworkers first experimented with the process for making the flywheel magnetos that generated the electricity for the Model T’s spark plugs. The moving assembly line cut production time from 20 minutes to five minutes. Their success prompted Ford to install conveyor systems throughout the factory.

Ford’s team also benefited from studying earlier examples of mass production. The ancient Romans, for instance, had employed division of labor to construct roads, monuments, and public buildings. Nineteenth-century clockmakers and gun manufacturers had built products with interchangeable parts. Yet Ford’s approach was more wide-ranging. To make the factory run as smoothly as possible, the company also carried out efficiency studies. Experts analyzed jobs to discover the most effective ways to complete them. Tasks were simplified, decreasing the need for highly paid craftsmen.

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Some argued that the new processes put too little emphasis on skill. More serious criticism came from people concerned about the dehumanizing effects of the assembly line. Using quick, robotic motions, each worker performed the same job over and over again. Factory bosses with stopwatches monitored workers' output and forbade them to speak to one another. Workers feeling bored and trapped by the assembly line complained, "Which is the slave—man or machine?"

But the result—reliable cars at reasonable prices—won over the public. And as the Ford Motor Company grew and worker satisfaction became more important, Ford took steps to address the need to keep employees happy.

Ford's introduction of the Five-Dollar Day reversed the tide and increased employee morale. Daily absenteeism fell from 10 percent to 0.3 percent. Fewer workers quit. And anyone who left was soon replaced by one of the 10,000 applicants seeking jobs at the factory.

To qualify for the daily minimum wage, workers had to meet special criteria. Married men were required to live with their families and take care of them. Single men older than 22 had to demonstrate "proven thrifty habits." Ford established a Sociological Department, which sent investigators to employee homes. Investigators offered health, homemaking, and shopping advice to workers, many of whom were recent immigrants. The department also discouraged employees from gambling, smoking, and drinking alcohol—habits Ford disliked.

Despite certain restrictions on the Five-Dollar Day, it turned out to be a success. Ford Motor Company workers received close to six million dollars in increased profit-sharing wages in 1914 alone. Eventually, other industrialists followed Ford's lead and started paying their employees "a living wage." Ford responded by announcing a "Six-Dollar Day" in 1919. And in 1926, Ford cut his employees' average workweek from six to five days. By instituting a five-day, 40-hour workweek, he indirectly helped create the modern weekend. Ford's dream to create a reliable car for the American masses changed how the world worked and played.

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Achievement Level: Standard Exceeded (continued)

Select the **two** sentences from the text that **best** support the inference that Ford made improvements by starting the assembly line in the factory.

- A. “Ford and his team followed four basic principles of mass production.”
- B. “Determined to speed up the process, Ford installed the industry’s first moving assembly line at his plant in Highland Park, Michigan.”
- C. “His conviction that ‘everything must move’ boosted Ford Motor Company’s production and reduced its costs.”
- D. “Meanwhile, Ford took dramatic steps to create more customers for his ‘motor car for the multitudes.’”
- E. “Manufacturers from England, Germany, and Russia studied and soon borrowed his methods.”
- F. “He sought advice from both employees and experts.”

Area	Reading Demonstrating understanding of literary and nonfiction texts
Standard(s)	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
Answer	C and E