

READING COMPREHENSION PRACTICE TEST 1

Questions 1 through 7 refer to the following passage:

In the 16th century, an age of great marine and terrestrial exploration, Ferdinand Magellan led the first expedition to sail around the world. As a young Portuguese noble, he served the king of Portugal, but he became involved in the quagmire of political intrigue at court and lost the king's favor. After he was dismissed from service by the king of Portugal, he offered to serve the future Emperor Charles V of Spain.

A papal decree of 1493 had assigned all land in the New World west of 50 degrees W longitude to Spain and all the land east of that line to Portugal. Magellan offered to prove that the East Indies fell under Spanish authority. On September 20, 1519, Magellan set sail from Spain with five ships. More than a year later, one of these ships was exploring the topography of South America in search of a water route across the continent. This ship sank, but the remaining four ships searched along the southern peninsula of South America. Finally they found the passage they sought near 50 degrees S latitude. Magellan named this passage the Strait of All Saints, but today it is known as the Strait of Magellan.

One ship deserted while in this passage and returned to Spain, so fewer sailors were privileged to gaze at that first panorama of the Pacific Ocean. Those who remained crossed the meridian now known as the International Date Line in the early spring of 1521 after 98 days on the Pacific Ocean. During those long days at sea, many of Magellan's men died of starvation and disease.

Later, Magellan became involved in an insular conflict in the Philippines and was killed in a tribal battle. Only one ship and 17 sailors under the command of the Basque navigator Elcano survived to complete the westward journey to Spain and thus prove once and for all that the world is round, with no precipice at the edge.

1. The 16th century was an age of great _____ exploration.

1. cosmic
2. land
3. mental
4. common man
5. None of the above

2. Magellan lost the favor of the king of Portugal when he became involved in a political _____.

1. entanglement
2. discussion
3. negotiation
4. problem
5. None of the above

3. The Pope divided New World lands between Spain and Portugal according to their location on one side or the other of an imaginary geographical line 50 degrees west of Greenwich that extends in a _____ direction.

1. north and south
2. crosswise
3. easterly
4. south east
5. north and west

4. One of Magellan's ships explored the _____ of South America for a passage across the continent.

1. coastline
2. mountain range
3. physical features
4. islands
5. None of the above

5. Four of the ships sought a passage along a southern _____.

1. coast
2. inland
3. body of land with water on three sides
4. border
5. Answer not available

6. The passage was found near 50 degrees S of _____.

1. Greenwich
2. The equator
3. Spain
4. Portugal
5. Madrid

7. In the spring of 1521, the ships crossed the _____ now called the International Date Line.

1. imaginary circle passing through the poles
2. imaginary line parallel to the equator
3. area
4. land mass
5. Answer not available

The following passage refers to questions 8 through 14.

Marie Curie was one of the most accomplished scientists in history. Together with her husband, Pierre, she discovered radium, an element widely used for treating cancer, and studied uranium and other radioactive substances. Pierre and Marie's amicable collaboration later helped to unlock the secrets of the atom.

Marie was born in 1867 in Warsaw, Poland, where her father was a professor of physics. At an early age, she displayed a brilliant mind and a blithe personality. Her great exuberance for learning prompted her to continue with her studies after high school. She became disgruntled, however, when she learned that the university in Warsaw was closed to women. Determined to receive a higher education, she defiantly left Poland and in 1891 entered the Sorbonne, a French university, where she earned her master's degree and doctorate in physics.

Marie was fortunate to have studied at the Sorbonne with some of the greatest scientists of her day, one of whom was Pierre Curie. Marie and Pierre were married in 1895 and spent many productive years working together in the physics laboratory. A short time after they discovered radium, Pierre was killed by a horse-drawn wagon in 1906. Marie was stunned by this horrible misfortune and endured heartbreaking anguish. Despondently she recalled their close relationship and the joy that they had shared in scientific research. The fact that she had two young daughters to raise by herself greatly increased her distress.

Curie's feeling of desolation finally began to fade when she was asked to succeed her husband as a physics professor at the Sorbonne. She was the first woman to be given a professorship at the world-famous university. In 1911 she received the Nobel Prize in chemistry for isolating radium. Although Marie Curie eventually suffered a fatal illness from her long exposure to radium, she never became disillusioned about her work. Regardless of the consequences, she had dedicated herself to science and to revealing the mysteries of the physical world.

8. The Curies' _____ collaboration helped to unlock the secrets of the atom.

1. friendly
2. competitive
3. courteous
4. industrious
5. chemistry

9. Marie had a bright mind and a _____ personality.

1. strong

2. lighthearted
3. humorous
4. strange
5. envious

10. When she learned that she could not attend the university in Warsaw, she felt _____.

1. hopeless
2. annoyed
3. depressed
4. worried
5. None of the above

11. Marie _____ by leaving Poland and traveling to France to enter the Sorbonne.

1. challenged authority
2. showed intelligence
3. behaved
4. was distressed
5. Answer not available

12. _____ she remembered their joy together.

1. Dejectedly
2. Worried
3. Tearfully
4. Happily
5. Irefully

13. Her _____ began to fade when she returned to the Sorbonne to succeed her husband.

1. misfortune
2. anger
3. wretchedness
4. disappointment
5. ambition

14. Even though she became fatally ill from working with radium, Marie Curie was never _____.

1. troubled
2. worried
3. disappointed
4. sorrowful
5. disturbed

The following passage refers to questions 15 through 19.

Mount Vesuvius, a volcano located between the ancient Italian cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum, has received much attention because of its frequent and destructive eruptions. The most famous of these eruptions occurred in A.D. 79.

The volcano had been inactive for centuries. There was little warning of the coming eruption, although one account unearthed by archaeologists says that a hard rain and a strong wind had disturbed the celestial calm during the preceding night. Early the next morning, the volcano poured a huge river of molten rock down upon Herculaneum, completely burying the city and filling the harbor with coagulated lava.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the mountain, cinders, stone and ash rained down on Pompeii. Sparks from the burning ash ignited the combustible rooftops quickly. Large portions of the city were destroyed in the conflagration. Fire, however, was not the only cause of destruction. Poisonous sulfuric gases saturated the air. These heavy gases were not buoyant in the atmosphere and therefore sank toward the earth and suffocated people.

Over the years, excavations of Pompeii and Herculaneum have revealed a great deal about the behavior of the volcano. By analyzing data, much as a zoologist dissects an animal specimen, scientists have concluded that the eruption changed large portions of the area's geography. For instance, it turned the Sarno River from its course and raised the level of the beach along the Bay of Naples. Meteorologists studying these events have also concluded that Vesuvius caused a huge tidal wave that affected the world's climate.

In addition to making these investigations, archaeologists have been able to study the skeletons of victims by using distilled water to wash away the volcanic ash. By strengthening the brittle bones with acrylic paint, scientists have been able to examine the skeletons and draw conclusions about the diet and habits of the residents. Finally, the excavations at both Pompeii and Herculaneum have yielded many examples of classical art, such as jewelry made of bronze, which is an alloy of copper and tin. The eruption of Mount Vesuvius and its tragic consequences have provided everyone with a wealth of data about the effects that volcanoes can have on the surrounding area. Today, volcanologists can locate and predict eruptions, saving lives and preventing the destruction of other cities and cultures.

15. Herculaneum and its harbor were buried under _____ lava.

1. liquid
2. solid
3. flowing
4. gas
5. Answer not available

16. The poisonous gases were not _____ in the air.

1. able to float
2. visible
3. able to evaporate
4. invisible
5. able to condense

17. Scientists analyzed data about Vesuvius in the same way that a zoologist _____ a specimen.

1. describes in detail
2. studies by cutting apart
3. photographs
4. chart
5. Answer not available

18. _____ have concluded that the volcanic eruption caused a tidal wave.

1. Scientists who study oceans
2. Scientists who study atmospheric conditions
3. Scientists who study ash
4. Scientists who study animal behavior
5. Answer not available in article

19. Scientists have used _____ water to wash away volcanic ash from the skeletons of victims.

1. bottled
2. volcanic
3. purified
4. sea
5. fountain

The following passage refers to questions 20-24.

Conflict had existed between Spain and England since the 1570s. England wanted a share of the wealth that Spain had been taking from the lands it had claimed in the Americas.

Elizabeth I, Queen of England, encouraged her staunch admiral of the navy, Sir Francis Drake, to raid Spanish ships and towns. Though these raids were on a small scale, Drake achieved dramatic success, adding gold and silver to England's treasury and diminishing Spain's supremacy.

Religious differences also caused conflict between the two countries. Whereas Spain was Roman Catholic, most of England had become Protestant. King Philip II of Spain wanted to claim the throne and make England a Catholic country again. To satisfy his ambition and also to retaliate against England's theft of his gold and silver, King Philip began to build his fleet of warships, the Spanish Armada, in January 1586.

Philip intended his fleet to be indestructible. In addition to building new warships, he marshaled 130 sailing vessels of all types and recruited more than 19,000 robust soldiers and 8,000 sailors. Although some of his ships lacked guns and others lacked ammunition, Philip was convinced that his Armada could withstand any battle with England.

The martial Armada set sail from Lisbon, Portugal, on May 9, 1588, but bad weather forced it back to port. The voyage resumed on July 22 after the weather became more stable.

The Spanish fleet met the smaller, faster, and more maneuverable English ships in battle off the coast of Plymouth, England, first on July 31 and again on August 2. The two battles left Spain vulnerable, having lost several ships and with its ammunition depleted. On August 7, while the Armada lay at anchor on the French side of the Strait of Dover, England sent eight burning ships into the midst of the Spanish fleet to set it on fire. Blocked on one side, the Spanish ships could only drift away, their crews in panic and disorder. Before the Armada could regroup, the English attacked again on August 8.

Although the Spaniards made a valiant effort to fight back, the fleet suffered extensive damage. During the eight hours of battle, the Armada drifted perilously close to the rocky coastline. At the moment when it seemed that the Spanish ships would be driven onto the English shore, the wind shifted, and the Armada drifted out into the North Sea. The Spaniards recognized the superiority of the English fleet and returned home, defeated.

20. Sir Francis Drake added wealth to the treasury and diminished Spain's _____.

1. unlimited power
2. unrestricted growth
3. territory
4. treaties
5. Answer not available in article

21. King Philip recruited many _____ soldiers and sailors.

1. warlike
2. strong
3. accomplished
4. timid
5. inexperienced

22. The _____ Armada set sail on May 9, 1588.

1. complete
2. warlike
3. independent
4. isolated
5. Answer not available

23. The two battles left the Spanish fleet _____.

1. open to change
2. triumphant
3. open to attack

4. defeated
5. discouraged

24. The Armada was _____ on one side.

1. closed off
2. damaged
3. alone
4. circled
5. Answer not available in this article

The following passage refers to questions 25-29.

The victory of the small Greek democracy of Athens over the mighty Persian Empire in 490 B.C. is one of the most famous events in history. Darius, king of the Persian Empire, was furious because Athens had interceded for the other Greek city-states in revolt against Persian domination. In anger the king sent an enormous army to defeat Athens. He thought it would take drastic steps to pacify the rebellious part of the empire.

Persia was ruled by one man. In Athens, however, all citizens helped to rule. Ennobled by this participation, Athenians were prepared to die for their city-state. Perhaps this was the secret of the remarkable victory at Marathon, which freed them from Persian rule. On their way to Marathon, the Persians tried to fool some Greek city-states by claiming to have come in peace. The frightened citizens of Delos refused to believe this. Not wanting to abet the conquest of Greece, they fled from their city and did not return until the Persians had left. They were wise, for the Persians next conquered the city of Eritrea and captured its people.

Tiny Athens stood alone against Persia. The Athenian people went to their sanctuaries. There they prayed for deliverance. They asked their gods to expedite their victory. The Athenians refurbished their weapons and moved to the plain of Marathon, where their little band would meet the Persians. At the last moment, soldiers from Plataea reinforced the Athenian troops.

The Athenian army attacked, and Greek citizens fought bravely. The power of the mighty Persians was offset by the love that the Athenians had for their city. Athenians defeated the Persians in both archery and hand combat. Greek soldiers seized Persian ships and burned them, and the Persians fled in terror. Herodotus, a famous historian, reports that 6,400 Persians died, compared to only 192 Athenians.

25. Athens had _____ the other Greek city-states against the Persians.

1. refused help to
2. intervened on behalf of
3. wanted to fight
4. given orders for all to fight
5. defeated

26. Darius took drastic steps to _____ the rebellious Athenians.

1. weaken
2. destroy
3. calm
4. irritate
5. Answer not available

27. Their participation _____ to the Athenians.

1. gave comfort
2. gave honor
3. gave strength
4. gave fear
5. gave hope

28. The people of Delos did not want to _____ the conquest of Greece.

1. end
2. encourage
3. think about
4. daydream about
5. Answer not available

29. The Athenians were _____ by some soldiers who arrived from Plataea.

1. welcomed
2. strengthened
3. held
4. captured
5. Answer not available

The following passage refers to questions 30-32.

The Trojan War is one of the most famous wars in history. It is well known for the 10-year duration, for the heroism of a number of legendary characters, and for the Trojan horse. What may not be familiar, however, is the story of how the war began.

According to Greek myth, the strife between the Trojans and the Greeks started at the wedding of Peleus, King of Thessaly, and Thetis, a sea nymph. All of the gods and goddesses had been invited to the wedding celebration in Troy except Eris, goddess of discord. She had been omitted from the guest list because her presence always embroiled mortals and immortals alike in conflict.

To take revenge on those who had slighted her, Eris decided to cause a skirmish. Into the middle of the banquet hall, she threw a golden apple marked "for the most beautiful." All of the goddesses began to haggle over who should possess it. The gods and goddesses reached a stalemate when the choice was narrowed to Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite. Someone was needed to settle the controversy by picking a winner. The job eventually fell to Paris, son of King Priam of Troy, who was said to be a good judge of beauty. Paris did not have an easy job. Each goddess, eager to win the golden apple, tried aggressively to bribe him.

"I'll grant you vast kingdoms to rule," promised Hera. "Vast kingdoms are nothing in comparison with my gift," contradicted Athena. "Choose me and I'll see that you win victory and fame in war." Aphrodite outdid her adversaries, however. She won the golden apple by offering Helen, daughter of Zeus and the most beautiful mortal in the land, to Paris. Paris, anxious to claim Helen, set off for Sparta in Greece.

Although Paris learned that Helen was married, he nevertheless accepted the hospitality of her husband, King Menelaus of Sparta. Therefore, Menelaus was outraged for a number of reasons when Paris departed, taking Helen and much of the king's wealth back to Troy. Menelaus collected his loyal forces and set sail for Troy to begin the war to reclaim Helen.

30. Eris was known for _____ both mortals and immortals.

1. scheming against
2. creating conflict amongst
3. feeling hostile toward
4. ignoring
5. comforting

31. Each goddess tried _____ to bribe Paris.

1. boldly
2. effectively

3. secretly
4. carefully
5. Answer not available

32. Athena _____ Hera, promising Paris victory and fame in war.

1. disregarded the statement of
2. defeated
3. agreed with
4. restated the statement of
5. questioned the statement of