

**VIRGINIA  
STANDARDS OF LEARNING ASSESSMENTS**

**Spring 2003 Released Test**

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**GRADE 8  
ENGLISH:  
READING/LITERATURE AND RESEARCH**

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**DIRECTIONS**

Read each passage. Then read each question about the passage. Decide which is the best answer to each question.

**SAMPLE**

**Crow**

Shadow on the shiny snow.  
Feathers sleek,  
Darting eye searching.  
Call echoing across  
5 Desolate corn fields.  
A ghost figure  
In leafless trees,  
He shifts his head,  
Deciphering the breeze.  
10 He shifts his eyes  
To look my way.  
I sympathize.  
He flies away.

**A** The figure in line 6 refers to —

- A** the crow
- B** the poet
- C** a field
- D** a tree

**B** The imagery in this poem creates a mood of —

- F** playfulness
- G** loneliness
- H** danger
- J** dreaminess

Directions: Read the advertisement and answer the questions that follow.

*Are you always* **busy?**

*Is your schedule* **hectic?**

*Do you sometimes forget to take time to* **eat?**

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, then you need



## QUICKEATS

HEALTHY EATING THAT FITS  
YOUR DAILY ROUTINE.



Vacuum-sealed meals for people on the go!

Nutritious, low-sugar, low-fat, well-balanced meals in a convenient pouch!

They don't spoil!

Are you in the mood for a hot meal? Or do you prefer a cold dish instead?

Hot or cold, **Quickeats** are delicious, and the tantalizing aroma will have you believing you are eating a home-cooked meal. A variety of meals is already available at leading grocery stores in your area.

Try our **Red Hot Quickeats!**

(Heat in a microwave for 3 minutes.)

Stew with Garden Vegetables

Barbecued Chicken and Rice

Creamy Ham and Noodles

Choose one of our **Cool Blue Quickeats!**

(Refrigerate for extra coldness, if desired.)

Yogurt with Dried Fruit and Nuts

Vegetables and Pasta Salad

Tuna Salad and Whole Wheat Crackers

**Quickeats** are reasonably priced and ready to eat. Take the coupon below to a participating store to receive a free Red Hot or Cool Blue container that will fit neatly in your backpack, briefcase, or shoulder bag, and keep your **Quickeats** meal hot or cold until you're ready to eat it. Each container holds up to 4 **Quickeats**.

If you have questions or suggestions, please contact our national office:

Neavest Inc., P.O. Box 90210, Lexinet, VA

or call 1-888-293-3151



***One FREE container for Quickeats with the purchase of one Quickeats meal.***

1 What does the phrase “on the go” mean in this advertisement?

- A Hard to find
- B About to leave
- C Working properly
- D Very active

2 In this advertisement, tantalizing means —

- F original
- G frequent
- H tempting
- J common

3 From information in this advertisement, the reader can conclude that “Neavest” is *probably* a —

- A food manufacturer
- B government agency
- C consumer organization
- D supermarket chain

4 This ad is designed to appeal to people who —

- F like home-cooked meals
- G want to save money
- H want to be like others
- J don’t have much time

5 Which of these is a *fact* presented in this advertisement?

- A Eating Quickeats is like eating homemade food.
- B Quickeats fit in people’s daily routine.
- C One Quickeats meal consists of vegetables and pasta.
- D Quickeats are packaged in a convenient way.

6 Which of these questions is answered in the advertisement?

- F What kinds of dried fruit are included in a Cool Blue Quickeats meal with yogurt?
- G Is a Quickeats container small enough to fit into a backpack?
- H Can Red Hot Quickeats be prepared on a stove as well as in a microwave oven?
- J How long are Quickeats available at local stores?

7 Which of these is the *best* summary of this advertisement?

- A Neavest can be contacted at P.O. Box 90210 in Lexinet, Virginia.
- B Quickeats are easy to prepare and come in both hot and cold varieties.
- C One Red Hot Quickeats meal is stew with garden vegetables.
- D People with questions or suggestions should call 1-888-293-3151.

Directions: Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.

## Alone in the Night

- 1 Except for a few pieces of furniture, the new house echoed with emptiness. The hubbub of the day was over. The sounds of Jackie Herrera’s younger siblings playing were replaced with an almost eerie silence.
- 2 Jackie hadn’t quite finished painting her room in the new house when the rest of the family decided to quit for the day and go home. Jackie wanted to stay and finish painting her room so that she could get an early start the next day arranging her furniture and putting her things away. She was eager to get settled. The silence didn’t bother Jackie at first because she knew that after her mother had put the younger children to bed, she’d be back to spend the night.
- 3 Mrs. Herrera had not returned by the time Jackie finished painting her room, so Jackie curled up on the couch and dozed off. It seemed like the middle of the night when Jackie was awakened by a scratching, scraping sound that sent chills down her spine. Jackie lifted her head from the arm of the couch so she could hear better. Then, she heard it again. It sounded like the scratching of fingernails on a blackboard, but Jackie knew everyone had left the house. She fumbled in the darkness for her flashlight. Training the beam of light on the curtainless window, Jackie saw an ominous, dark shape move past. She snapped off the flashlight and pulled the sheet over her head. The front door creaked open, and Jackie cringed. She could hear footsteps. Someone was in the house, but who? When Jackie felt a hand touch her arm, she gasped and nearly jumped out of her skin.
- 4 “Jackie, you asleep?” Mrs. Herrera whispered.
- 5 “Phew!” Jackie sighed, throwing off the sheet. “Mom, I’m glad you’re here. Were you writing on the blackboard in the kitchen?”
- 6 “I wrote your father a note to remind him to get light bulbs tomorrow,” she replied. “Why?”
- 7 “When I heard someone writing on the blackboard a few minutes ago, I was frightened,” Jackie explained, still trying to stop shaking.
- 8 “Well, I wasn’t writing on the blackboard a few minutes ago. I just now got back here. I wrote that note before I left.”
- 9 Jackie hurried to the kitchen to investigate. In big letters, “REMEMBER SAW” had been scrawled on the board in yellow chalk.
- 10 Remember *what*? Saw *what*? Jackie asked herself. Then, as every scary book she had ever read crossed her mind, Jackie called out to her mother, “Mom, did you write ‘REMEMBER SAW’ on the blackboard?”
- 11 “No! Why?” asked Mrs. Herrera, peering into the kitchen at the blackboard. “My note is gone.” She looked at the blackboard, frowned in confusion, and said, “I’m sure this is nothing to be concerned about, but now you’ve got me spooked. Let’s go home for the night and sleep in our own comfortable beds.”
- 12 In the morning when the family returned to the new house, everything looked cheerful and bright. The wind had died down, and the sun was illuminating Jackie’s freshly painted room. Last night’s incident seemed silly. Jackie pulled a stepladder into the closet so she could begin placing her things on the shelves. Suddenly, she heard a deafening roar near her head. Before she could cover her ears with her hands, Jackie heard a loud, shrill screech. “There it is again!”

She climbed down from her perch and ran to the blackboard in the kitchen. “REMEMBER SAW” was gone. Instead, the blackboard was decorated with a child-like drawing of a house, a tree, and a dog colored in pink, blue, and yellow chalk.

- 13 “Where is everybody?” Jackie shouted. Toys were scattered on the floor, but her little sisters were not there. No one was in the living room or the dining room either. The house echoed that eerie silence again. Jackie pushed open the kitchen door. Everyone was gathered in the backyard, looking skyward. “What’s everyone looking at?” Jackie frowned and looked up, too.
- 14 Roar! Crack! Screech! The silence was broken. A tree limb skated across the tin roof and dropped to the ground with a thud.
- 15 “That’s it, Mom!” Jackie exclaimed. “That’s the sound I heard last night, but Dad wasn’t here trimming the trees in the middle of the night!”
- 16 “That’s true,” said Mrs. Herrera, puzzled. After a moment, her face brightened. “Dad is trimming those branches because they were hanging so low and . . .”
- 17 Jackie finished the sentence, “. . . and the high winds last night were blowing them close enough to scrape against the roof! So it was Dad who wrote that note to remind himself to bring the chain saw over here today.”
- 18 Jackie walked back into the kitchen, erased the blackboard, and wrote a note to herself, “Now I Saw!”

**8 What is the setting of this story?**

- F A historical house
- G An imaginary house
- H A haunted house
- J An unoccupied house

**9 Which kind of language is the narrator using when she says that Jackie “nearly jumped out of her skin” in paragraph 3?**

- A Technical
- B Formal
- C Literal
- D Figurative

**10 The author builds tension in the story by —**

- F listing one detail after another
- G describing what Jackie is doing
- H providing information gradually
- J using limited dialogue

**11 The message on the blackboard reinforces —**

- A Jackie’s overactive imagination
- B Mr. Herrera’s presence in the house
- C Mrs. Herrera’s confusion
- D the narrator’s sense of humor

**12 In the story, the author uses the character Mr. Herrera to —**

- F** add humor to the situation
- G** resolve the problem
- H** introduce other characters
- J** present a second point of view

**13 Which point of view does the author use in this story?**

- A** First person, Mrs. Herrera
- B** First person, Jackie
- C** Third person, limited
- D** Third person, omniscient

**14 Which statement expresses the theme of the story?**

- F** A good imagination helps you make better judgments.
- G** Things are not always what they appear to be.
- H** Never stay alone all night in a new house.
- J** The things that happen in scary books do not happen to real people.

**15 “Alone in the Night” can *best* be described as a —**

- A** mystery
- B** tall tale
- C** biography
- D** fantasy

Directions: Read the poem and answer the questions that follow.

## Ups and Downs

- In the dog days of August, the sun beats a slow drum  
On hours dry as feathers, but we don't mind.  
We loll at the beach, tanned and sweaty,  
Cooled by crystal waters, under skies blue  
5 And perfect as childhood. But the river minds.  
He gives himself up, drop by drop, *lower, lower*,  
Sinks into himself, sad and sullen,  
And scared, I think, of dying: *slower, slower*.  
I smell the muddy reeds, see logs we've never seen.  
10 Rocks appear like nightmares in August noons.
- September brings thunder, lightning, downpour  
Days of torrents, drizzles, sheets, and showers.  
The end of the dock sinks as the thirsty river  
Drinks and guzzles, sloshing, slobbering,  
15 Rushing. The crooked snake nuzzles the banks,  
Hugs the bends he's whittled over long years.  
He's giddy—tumbling, somersaulting, rock vaulting!  
We read books, tie flies, play games, bake pies  
As the golden leaves are pelted off their branches,  
20 And the stiff brown moss turns green and lush again.
- October's Indian summer is dry. Crackling leaves,  
Snapping branches. No campfires allowed. The river  
Dwindles, shrinks. The bogs dry up to stinky stones  
Like white bones: where do the frogs go? The river  
25 Flattens, thins, fish huddle in its muddy rims.  
Forest fires in Canada! One day we wake to hazy smoke,  
Shudder, watch our river choke. We watch the logs  
And rocks poke their heads again, grinning  
Cackling: *Come and get us!* The weather station  
30 Says drought. Drought. The beavers wait.
- The paper says it's snowing in The Country, what if . . .  
If the river freezes low, what will the beavers do?  
But November brings relief, for just as the last red leaf  
Drops, the skies open and cry! Autumn deluge,  
35 River refuge. We hear it on the roof—all night—  
All day—We hear the river praising rain! Again, it  
Drinks its fill, rises, rises, swells, surprises.  
As we pull out the docks, in our hip-waders,  
The cold river is high and mighty, it rushes round  
40 Our thighs and screams: *AAHHEEE! Let winter come!*



16 The first line of “Ups and Downs” is an example of —

- F personification
- G simile
- H metaphor
- J onomatopoeia

17 Why does the speaker “see logs we’ve never seen” (line 9)?

- A Beavers are busy cutting logs to build dams.
- B New trees are falling into the river.
- C The river is drying up and exposing the logs.
- D People have thrown odd things into the river.

18 What does the description in line 13 mean?

- F The dock is old and is sinking into the river.
- G The dock is lower at one end than the other.
- H The river is rising higher.
- J The river is eating the dock away.

19 Look at the thesaurus entry.

**vault:** (v.) jerk, leap, start, rise

If the author wanted to replace the word **vaulting** in line 17, which would be the *most* precise word to use from the thesaurus entry?

- A jerking
- B rising
- C starting
- D leaping

**20 The poet uses the term “high and mighty” in line 39 to show that the river is —**

- F** very inviting
- G** threatening to leave its banks
- H** more powerful than people
- J** strong again

**21 Who is the speaker in this poem?**

- A** A person who lives near a river
- B** Different people at different times of the year
- C** The river that needs water
- D** A beaver that lives near the river

**22 Which is a simile expressed in this poem?**

- F** “We read books . . .”
- G** “September brings thunder . . .”
- H** “Rocks appear like nightmares . . .”
- J** “As we pull out . . .”

**23 Which description from the poem *best* creates a clear, visual image of the weather in September?**

- A** “Drinks and guzzles, sloshing, slobbering . . .”
- B** “Days of torrents, drizzles, sheets, and showers.”
- C** “And the stiff brown moss turns green and lush again.”
- D** “As the golden leaves are pelted off their branches . . .”

Directions: Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.

## **The Wreck of the *Queen Anne's Revenge***

- 1 On November 23, 1996, a team of marine archaeologists worked with an air of finality. For the Maritime Research Institute, this was the last day of operations. The team knew that each dive brought them closer to the end of their fruitless search. Their quest was to find the shipwrecked hull of the *Queen Anne's Revenge*, one of the most infamous vessels to sail the Atlantic during the 1700s. The ship had gained its bad reputation through the plundering deeds of its last captain—none other than the ill-famed pirate known as Blackbeard.
- 2 The quest for the wreck of the *Queen Anne's Revenge* had actually begun on land about ten years earlier. A man named Phil Masters was searching the London Archives, which is a collection of historical records and documents. He was intrigued by one document that gave an eyewitness account of the loss of the pirate ship. This prompted him to apply for a permit to explore a six-mile stretch of coast around North Carolina's Beaufort Inlet. It was here that the *Queen Anne's Revenge* had reportedly run aground.
- 3 This was not the first vessel believed to be lying under the waters of this coastal sector. In fact, this area is called the "Graveyard of the Atlantic" because it is believed to house the remains of hundreds of ships. But Masters knew that finding the oldest, largest, and most heavily-armed ship of its kind would be a significant achievement.
- 4 One of the divers on this fateful day was Will Kirkman. Making a routine, twenty-foot dive off a sandbar on the North Carolina coast, Kirkman stopped in mid-swim. Suddenly, he found himself among a mass of hulking, barnacle-encrusted objects with a familiar shape of cannons. The *Queen Anne's Revenge* was outfitted with cannons. In fact the ship had forty of them! Kirkman was sure he had discovered the object of his search. The excavation could begin.
- 5 Kirkman and his fellow divers were familiar with the legendary Captain Blackbeard. They had also known the ship's well-traveled history before the pirates came onto the scene. One hundred feet long with three towering masts, the ship was first named the *Concord*. In 1711, during Queen Anne's War, the French captured it from the English and renamed it *La Concorde*. France used it as a merchant ship to transport goods for a brief period and then sold her to Spain. Later, the French got her back again to use as a slave ship. However, *La Concorde* made just one trip to West Africa in 1717 before Blackbeard captured it. He ran a black flag up its mast and renamed it the *Queen Anne's Revenge*.
- 6 The pirate commanded her for only seven months. During this time he reportedly captured at least 18 other ships, stealing their cargo. In one famous incident, Blackbeard led a week-long blockade of the port of Charleston, South Carolina. The pirates apprehended and looted any ship that tried to pass. As a result of these escapades, Blackbeard supposedly had been carrying a large cache of gold and silver aboard the *Queen Anne's Revenge* when the ship was abandoned at Beaufort Inlet.
- 7 Despite this fact, the divers were not expecting to find any sunken treasure. They knew that Blackbeard and his crew had probably taken all of the ship's valuables when they left the ship. What they have uncovered is most of the ship's wooden hull. Also, they have discovered many artifacts including the ship's bell (made in 1709), a blunderbuss, pewter plates, parts of a brass scientific instrument, and eighteen of its legendary forty cannons.

- 8 What the archaeologists want most from the *Queen Anne's Revenge* is much more important than material objects. By studying her remains, many questions may be answered about the activities of Blackbeard and the society of his day. The scientists also hope that the ship itself will provide clues about ship construction and naval architecture. Finally, they hope a study of the ship and its contents will help them gain insight into the African slave trade.
- 9 Blackbeard abandoned the *Queen Anne's Revenge* as part of an escape plan. In doing so, he left behind a "time capsule" that may give modern science the keys to unlock some 300-year-old mysteries.

**24 In the first paragraph, the word infamous means —**

- F notorious
- G celebrated
- H ornate
- J large

**25 Masters felt confident about the location of the *Queen Anne's Revenge* because —**

- A many artifacts had been found nearby
- B he had found written evidence
- C many people talked about it
- D he was able to get a permit

**26 The *La Concorde* made just one trip to West Africa because —**

- F the English captured it back from the French
- G it became disabled before it could return
- H the French entered another war
- J Blackbeard captured it after the first trip

**27 Look at the thesaurus entry.**

**apprehend:** (v.) seize, capture, arrest, understand, dread, fear, grasp, perceive

**If the author had wanted to replace the word apprehended in paragraph 6, what would be the *most* precise word to use from the thesaurus entry?**

- A arrested
- B understood
- C seized
- D dreaded

**28 Which question is answered in paragraph 7?**

- F Where was the ship's bell made?
- G What artifacts have been found?
- H How many pewter plates were found?
- J When will the search end?

29 Which word from paragraph 8 contains a root word that means “to build”?

- A material
- B activities
- C studying
- D construction

30 Based on information in the last paragraph, the reader can *best* conclude that Blackbeard —

- F lost his way in the inlet
- G was able to avoid capture
- H often destroyed his ships
- J had buried his treasure on the beach

31 Looking for the *Queen Anne’s Revenge* was significant because —

- A it would prove that many other ships were in the same area
- B the ship and its captain had played important roles in history
- C it would provide valuable cannons to use for other purposes
- D the Maritime Research Institute was conducting the search

32 Which of these is an *opinion* expressed in this passage?

- F What the archaeologists want most from the *Queen Anne’s Revenge* is much more important than material objects.
- G The quest for the wreck of the *Queen Anne’s Revenge* had actually begun on land about ten years earlier.
- H A man named Phil Masters was searching the London Archives, which is a collection of historical records.
- J During this time, Blackbeard reportedly captured at least 18 other ships, stealing their cargo.

33 Which is the *best* summary of this passage?

- A On the final day of their search, marine archaeologists discovered the remains of the *Queen Anne’s Revenge* and have since uncovered many interesting artifacts.
- B Blackbeard, the pirate, captured and used the *Concord* for seven months after renaming the ship the *Queen Anne’s Revenge*.
- C The search for the *Queen Anne’s Revenge* was begun in 1986 by a man named Phil Masters after he became interested from reading an eyewitness account.
- D A diver named Will Kirkman was the first to discover the *Queen Anne’s Revenge* near a sandbar on the North Carolina Coast.

Directions: Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.

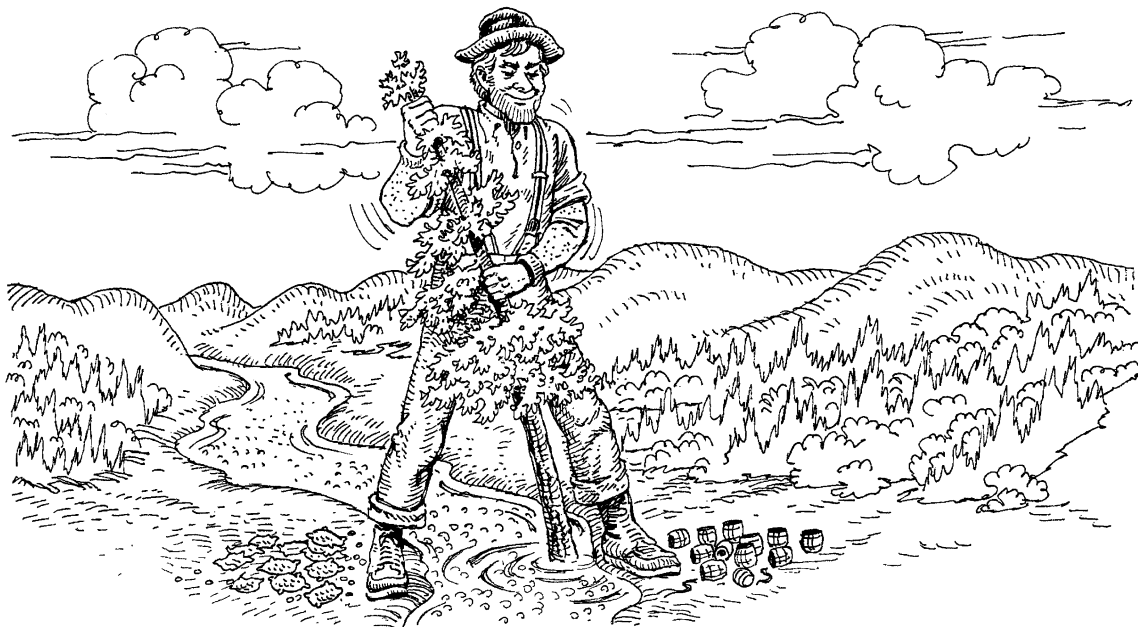
## Tony Beaver . . . Axe-Swinger of Old Virginny

Retold by Tony Simon

- 1 CR-AA-ACK!
- 2 With one mighty stroke of his axe, Tony Beaver could lay low any tree in the forest. CR-AA-ACK! One blow and a giant tree would snap in two like a matchstick.
- 3 If Tony Beaver happened to be in a hurry, down would come two trees at a time. He'd chop the first tree — behind him — with his *back* swing. He'd chop the second tree with his forward *swing*. That's the kind of lumberman big Tony Beaver was.
- 4 Tony set up a lumber camp in West Virginia. His men chopped down trees faster than you can say "TIM-M-MBER!"
- 5 Come to think of it, Tony's men never had a chance to shout "TIM-M-MBER!" A tree would crash to the ground before a lumberjack could drop his jaw to yell the warning. That's why Tony's men wore rubber helmets to protect their heads. That was a sight to see. Falling trees bouncing off the helmets of Tony Beaver's lumberjacks!
- 6 Oxen were used to drag the timber to nearby rivers. Naturally, Tony Beaver couldn't use just any old oxen. His were "TREE-mendous" (as Tony used to say). Big? Why, do you know how long it took a bird to fly across from one horn to the other horn on those oxen? Three hours! Yes, sir, Tony's oxen could pull anything right into the middle of next month.
- 7 So, every middle of the next month, Tony's lumberjacks were busy, dumping their loads of timber into the rivers, and floating the logs downstream to the sawmills.
- 8 The Tony Beaver lumber camp was near the Eel River. Don't bother looking for it on a map of West Virginia. The Eel isn't a river anymore. Here's what happened to it:
- 9 One day, after weeks of rain, the Eel began to rise rapidly above its banks. The town near Tony's camp was in danger of being flooded.
- 10 The townspeople were alarmed. They rushed to Tony Beaver.
- 11 "Help us dam the river," they said. "If we don't work fast ALL of West Virginia will be under water."
- 12 "Oh, no, it won't," Tony said calmly. "We'll tame the Eel once and for all — right now!"
- 13 Tony told the people to shell every West Virginia peanut they could find. He ordered his men to bring him every barrel of molasses in the state. Soon the peanuts and molasses began to arrive.
- 14 Tony straddled the rising Eel — one foot on the right bank, one foot on the left bank. He pulled up a giant hickory tree and began to stir the fast-flowing water.
- 15 "Throw the peanuts into the river," he shouted to the people. Then he turned to his men. "Pour in the molasses — every last drop."

- 16 Soon the Eel River was filled with peanuts and molasses. The sun came out, baking hot. The molasses, warmed by the sun, stuck to the peanuts. The river became thicker and stickier. Then Tony blew a cloud right across the sun.
- 17 The river of molasses and peanuts quickly cooled. In a few minutes the molasses hardened. The Eel River stopped flowing. It was as solid as rock!
- 18 Everyone cheered Tony Beaver.
- 19 But Tony only smiled. He had still another surprise up his sleeve.
- 20 "Thank you. Now we'll all celebrate and have a party. Break off a chunk of the river and eat it."
- 21 That's what the townspeople did. Then they cheered again. The river was delicious. It tasted just like candy! And that's exactly what it was. Tony had invented *peanut brittle*!

"Tony Beaver . . . Axe-Swinger of Old Virginny" from FAR OUT TALES retold by Tony Simon. © 1958 by Scholastic Magazines, Inc. Reprinted by permission of Scholastic Inc.



34 It is clear that this selection is a tall tale because —

- F tall tales were very popular in West Virginia
- G the details become less and less believable
- H many legends of giant lumberjacks have been told
- J the story is set in the nineteenth century

35 What can the reader conclude about Tony Beaver's accomplishments in this story?

- A They were not important.
- B They inspired others.
- C They never really happened.
- D They were well known.



**36 In paragraph 2, what does the author mean by the phrase “snap in two like a matchstick”?**

- F** Break easily
- G** Shed light
- H** Fall apart
- J** Crash down

**37 What does the author mean when he writes that the oxen could pull anything “right into the middle of next month”?**

- A** The oxen could carry the load anywhere.
- B** Time was not important to the oxen.
- C** The lumberjacks were dependent upon the oxen.
- D** It usually took the oxen one month to complete the work.

**38 What does Tony do to solve the problem?**

- F** Uses bigger oxen to haul logs
- G** Turns the river into candy
- H** Works with a double-bladed axe
- J** Stirs the river with a tree

**39 Which phrase from the story offers an image of Tony’s abilities?**

- A** The Eel began to rise rapidly above its banks.
- B** That’s the kind of lumberman big Tony Beaver was.
- C** Then Tony blew a cloud right across the sun.
- D** Oxen were used to drag the timber to nearby rivers.

**40 The author *probably* meant for this story to be —**

- F** humorous
- G** educational
- H** historical
- J** dangerous

**41 The author uses exaggeration to make the story more —**

- A** frightening
- B** believable
- C** action-packed
- D** entertaining

**42 In which literary category does this story belong?**

- F** Nonfiction
- G** Biography
- H** History
- J** Fiction