


Minnesota MCA Grade 5 Reading Practice

Exam Materials
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Name _____

Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments-Series III

Reading Item Sampler
Grade 5



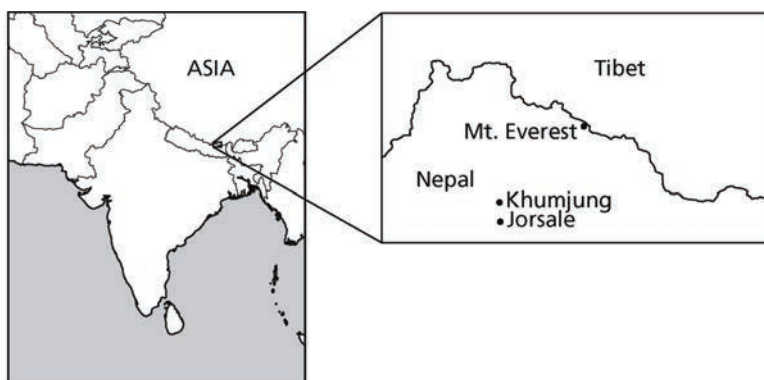
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Reading Test — Segment 1

Read this story about a boy who gains a new understanding of his sister. Then answer the questions. Some questions may ask you about certain paragraphs. The paragraphs are numbered on the left side.

Pemba Sherpa

by Olga Cossi



- 1 I am a Sherpa. My ancestors came from Tibet. Sherpas are world famous for their work as porters and guides. We lead the climbers and trekkers who try to reach the snowcapped peaks of the Himalayas.
- 2 Like every other schoolchild in Khumjung, I dreamed of becoming the best porter and guide in all of Nepal. My younger sister Yang Ki wanted to be a porter, too. But, at that time, girls were not allowed to train for this work. I knew this, and so did Yang Ki. I can close my eyes and remember, just like I am there, the day that would change our lives forever. . . .
- • •
- 3 The sun is not up as I start down the long, steep trail to Jorsale where my father is cutting wood. It takes almost three hours to run down, fill my basket, and carry it back up to school before classes start at nine o'clock.
- 4 When I reach the steepest, narrowest part of the trail, I hear a sound behind me. It is probably Yang Ki following me. I wait for her to catch up.
- 5 "Go back! You cannot come with me!" I shout at her.
- 6 Yang Ki does not move.
- 7 "Go back!" I repeat angrily. "It is too far for me to take you home!"

- 8 Yang Ki shakes her head and says, "No!"
- 9 I am so angry that I think of throwing a stone at her. But she is my little sister, and I cannot do that.
- 10 "The Yeti will get you," I tell Yang Ki, hoping to scare her.
- 11 The Yeti is our legendary snowman. His footprints have been seen not far from here.
- 12 Yang Ki shows no fear. I am not surprised.
- 13 I shrug my shoulders and start running again. I hurry even faster than before. If Yang Ki loses sight of me, she may become discouraged and turn back.
- 14 The trail drops sharply and my feet fly over the rocks. Suddenly as I round a turn, a landslide breaks loose from the high bank. It thunders past me toward the steep canyon far below.
- 15 I am running too fast. I cannot stop. My feet hit the loose rocks. I am caught in the landslide. I fall headlong toward the edge of the canyon.
- 16 My fingers claw the earth. It is no use. The force of the landslide carries me with it.
- 17 What can I do? I see a tree root. I lunge for it and hang on. I grind to a stop inches from the edge.
- 18 My heart drums in my chest. I am afraid to shout. My voice may start a new landslide and take me with it. I am afraid to look down. I stay perfectly still and wait for my heartbeat to slow down.
- 19 As soon as my breath returns, I look up. Yang Ki is standing beside the trail above me. I close my eyes to hold back the tears. When I open them again, she is not there.
- 20 It seems like forever before Yang Ki comes back. She is dragging a long bamboo pole. It looks green and fresh. How did she cut it, I wonder?
- 21 I do not wonder for long. My arms are aching from holding the root. My strength is giving out. I will have to let go very soon.
- 22 Yang Ki takes one step down the bank where the landslide began. Then another step. Then another. Slowly, carefully, she makes her way to a large tree. She braces herself against the trunk. She pushes the bamboo pole toward me. I watch it come closer . . . closer . . . at last, it is within reach.

- 23 I look up at Yang Ki. Our eyes meet. We both know that my life is in her hands. Is she strong enough to hold her end of the pole while I pull myself up?
- 24 There is no time to think of what might happen if she lets go. I reach quickly for the pole. My fingers grip its smooth greenness and hold fast. I sink my fingernails into it to keep from slipping.
- 25 Yang Ki holds the narrow end of the bamboo with both hands. I pull on the other end, testing to see if she can stand my weight when I start to climb. She does not waver. I pull harder. Still she does not let the pole slip in her hands. I feel her strength and must trust it.
- 26 My eyes meet Yang Ki's once more. She is ready. I take a deep breath and make my move.
- 27 In an instant, I have both hands on the pole and am pulling myself up. My feet scramble trying to get a foothold in the sliding earth. The sound of rocks crashing below echoes through the canyon. I keep my eyes on Yang Ki and pull harder. She does not waver. Her thin arms are like steel bands holding the pole in place.
- 28 I work my way upward, hand over hand. At last, I reach the tree where she is braced. I wrap my arm around the trunk and pull myself to safety. We let go of the pole. We watch silently as it slithers away and disappears down the canyon.
- 29 The tale of my sister's bravery quickly spreads through our village, and then throughout the land. After that, I never doubted that Yang Ki would become a guide.

1. Which phrase describes the main purpose of paragraphs 1 and 2?
- A. To give details about the place where the story happens
 - B. To provide background information for the story
 - C. To tell when the events in the story happen
 - D. To reveal the causes of the events in the story
-
2. Which sentence states an important theme of the story?
- A. Brothers should be nice to their sisters.
 - B. Nature is more powerful than humans.
 - C. Humans are capable of extraordinary actions.
 - D. Family members should spend time together.
-
3. Which sentence gives information about Yang Ki's brother that would be missing if the story had been told from her point of view?
- A. "I am so angry that I think of throwing a stone at her."
(paragraph 9)
 - B. "I shrug my shoulders and start running again."
(paragraph 13)
 - C. "I fall headlong toward the edge of the canyon."
(paragraph 15)
 - D. "I wrap my arm around the trunk and pull myself to safety."
(paragraph 28)

4. Read this sentence from paragraph 27.

Her thin arms are like steel bands holding the pole in place.

The author uses the phrase “like steel bands” most likely to

- A. reveal Yang Ki’s calmness.
 - B. describe Yang Ki’s appearance.
 - C. emphasize Yang Ki’s strength.
 - D. explain Yang Ki’s position.
-

5. Read this sentence from paragraph 13.

If Yang Ki loses sight of me, she may become discouraged and turn back.

Which phrase means the same as discouraged?

- A. To give up hope
- B. To fill with fear
- C. To feel exhausted
- D. To lose direction

6. Which statement logically predicts Yang Ki's next actions following her brother's rescue?
- A. She will leave Nepal.
 - B. She will visit the Himalayas.
 - C. She will go to school.
 - D. She will train as a porter.
-
7. In paragraph 10, the narrator mentions the Yeti to Yang Ki to
- A. warn Yang Ki because he is worried about her.
 - B. urge Yang Ki to go home by frightening her.
 - C. distract Yang Ki by telling her an unusual story.
 - D. surprise Yang Ki by showing her the footprints.

Reading Test — Segment 2

For thousands of years, Native American nations have had a special relationship with the Cedar tree. Read this article about that relationship. Then answer the questions. Some questions may ask you about certain paragraphs. The paragraphs are numbered on the left side.

The Cedar: A Many Splendored Tree

by Professor Bhavani Manheim



- 1 Did you know that many Native American nations practiced ecological preservation? They respected the planet and knew secrets of biodiversity and myriad usages of plants and animals. Some plants had a very special significance for them, like the Cedar of the Pacific Northwest Coast. As far back as 9,000 years ago, the Native Americans called the Cedar the "*long-life-maker*" and "*rich woman maker*." It was an integral part of their every day life. They believed in its power and spirit.
- 2 The Cedar is a magnificent tree. It is a conifer, tall and straight and can reach a height of 200 feet, a diameter of 14 feet and an age of 500 years! It has a flared base tapering to a spiked tip, sometimes referred to as a "Cake Fork" because of its shape. Its branches spread horizontally. Long, slender, curved twigs bearing lace work of fern-like foliage called "withes" cascade from the branches. There are two kinds of Cedars: yellow and red. The Red Cedar's wood is soft but firm and straight grained. Its natural oil makes it long lasting.
- 3 Cedar grows extensively from the Baranof Island in Alaska to coastal Northern California, yet it is not native to North America. The tree found in the Northwest belongs to the species '*Arbor-Vitae*,' the Latin phrase meaning "Tree of Life." No wonder, the Native Americans called it *long-life-maker*! Before cutting the tree or

pulling its bark, they prayed to the Cedar Spirit, thanking it for being a good provider and expressing their gratitude. They believed that showing respect resulted in continued good supply. They utilized all parts of the tree.

- 4 Cedar was used for building boats, canoes, houses and other structures. It was used for carvings—to create Totem Poles and ceremonial objects and utensils. They steam-bent the wood (a technique unique to them), creating beautiful four-cornered boxes. The Cedar canoes were esteemed for their superb workmanship and were a valuable trade item. For example, a seal-catching canoe was worth 15 blankets and was a symbol of great wealth.
- 5 Traditionally, wood-working was done by men, but creating objects from the inner bark was usually done by women. The bark was peeled during the summer, when full of sap, needing no modification and could be used as is for making baskets, matting, rope, braiding, hats, rain ponchos, blankets and baby cradles. For people of the rainy, coastal range, clothing made of oiled, shredded Cedar bark provided protection from rain, wind and cold. The fluffy fiber of the shredded bark was soft and absorbent. It was used for making towels, baby diapers and blankets. The artistry of the baskets was greatly valued. It was used as a trade item and given as a gift to high ranking women during the Potlatch ceremonies (which centered on the sharing of wealth through feasts).
- 6 The smaller branches that hang down from the main branches were sought after for their strength. They were used for making ropes for fishing, sealing and as anchor lines for canoes. Since metal usage was unknown, they were used for binding, lashing and fastening boards. The slender roots of the tree were used to make coiled baskets and because of their watertightness, for making storage containers, cooking vessels and rain hats. They were also used for sewing and lashing equipment.
- 7 Because of its life sustaining nature, the Native Americans revered the tree. Many of their rituals incorporated parts of the tree, especially the bark. During a coming of age ceremony, the girl wore a ring of Cedar bark on her head. The bark was also used for healing purposes: as a tourniquet to stop bleeding, as a bandage and as a healing pad. Yellow Cedar was used for many cures. Its bark was burned and the ash mixed with catfish oil and smeared over a sick person as a cure. Chewed leaves were used to cure pains and aches. It was also used in sweat baths as a cleanser. The Native Americans' respect for nature is a good example for present generations to emulate and learn what "Green Living" really means.

8. Which sentence states a main idea of this article?
- A. Some trees and other plants had special meanings to Native Americans.
 - B. Native Americans used the Cedar tree in many responsible ways.
 - C. Some Native Americans believed in preserving the natural resources of Earth.
 - D. Native Americans valued the Cedar tree for its beauty and long life.
-
9. Which part of the tree did Native Americans use to make cooking vessels?
- A. The bark
 - B. The branches
 - C. The slender roots
 - D. The steamed wood

- 10.** Read this sentence from paragraph 7.

Because of its life sustaining nature, the Native Americans revered the tree.

Which word means the same as revered?

- A.** Replanted
 - B.** Avoided
 - C.** Shared
 - D.** Cherished
-

- 11.** Based on paragraph 6, readers can conclude that the anchor lines for canoes

- A.** needed to be strong to secure the canoes.
- B.** were the smallest parts of the canoes.
- C.** needed to be waterproof.
- D.** were hard to use.

- 12.** Which statement is the author's opinion?
- A.** "They believed in its power and spirit"
 - B.** "The Red Cedar's wood is soft but firm and straight grained"
 - C.** "The Native Americans' respect for nature is a good example for present generations to emulate"
 - D.** "It was used as a trade item and given as a gift to high ranking women during the Potlatch ceremonies"
-
- 13.** The author organized paragraphs 4–7 by
- A.** identifying the differences among the various parts of the Cedar tree.
 - B.** explaining why objects made from the Cedar tree were beautiful and highly valued.
 - C.** contrasting the ways Native American men and women used the Cedar tree.
 - D.** explaining how Native Americans made objects from different parts of the Cedar tree.

14. Read this sentence from paragraph 4.

For example, a seal-catching canoe was worth 15 blankets and was a symbol of great wealth.

The main purpose of this sentence is to

- A.** inform readers why Native Americans believed the Cedar had power.
- B.** emphasize how valuable a Cedar canoe was to Native Americans.
- C.** inform readers how much the making of a Cedar canoe cost Native Americans.
- D.** describe how Native Americans used the Cedar in many ways.

Reading Test — Segment 3

Read this poem from Nigeria about schoolchildren in a classroom waiting for rain to stop. Then answer the questions. Some questions may ask you about certain lines. The lines are numbered on the left side.

In the Ebony¹ Room

by Isaac Olaleye

- 1 In my classroom
We study by sunlight.
But when the wind whistles,
And the clouds hurry in front of the sun,
- 5 The trees bow.
Leaves flutter,
And the pages of our books
Begin flipping by themselves,
And the clouds are full of rain.
- 10 Then the wooden windows
Of my classroom
Are pulled shut.
- In the ebony dark room
Grinning students whisper
- 15 How wonderful it is
Not to have to do their
Arithmetic, reading, and writing.
The whispering fades.
On wooden desks students rest their heads.
- 20 On wooden tables teachers rest their heads.
For in the ebony room
The rain sings
A lullaby to students and teachers.
- The pit-a-pat of the rain
- 25 On the wooden windowpanes
And the whistling wind

¹Ebony—a dark color; a strong, dark wood

Get louder.

Pupils wake up and sing:

"Stop, rain, stop.

30 We cannot play on green grass.

We cannot go home to our parents.

Stop, rain, stop.

Come back another day."

But the rain, with a mind of its own,

35 Beats against our wooden windows.

And pit-a-pat we hear it say:

"I have a rain forest to fill

And grass to keep green!

I will rain till I'm through.

40 Children can wait.

My music will not."

So in the dark room we nod and doze

To the rain's lullaby.

15. Who is the main speaker in the poem?

- A.** A child
 - B.** The rain
 - C.** A teacher
 - D.** The wind
-

16. How does the poet organize the descriptions in lines 1–12?

- A.** He lists many of the objects found in a classroom.
 - B.** He shows a windy day and then compares it to a rainy day.
 - C.** He explains how the students behave in the classroom.
 - D.** He begins with a sunny day and then shows changing weather.
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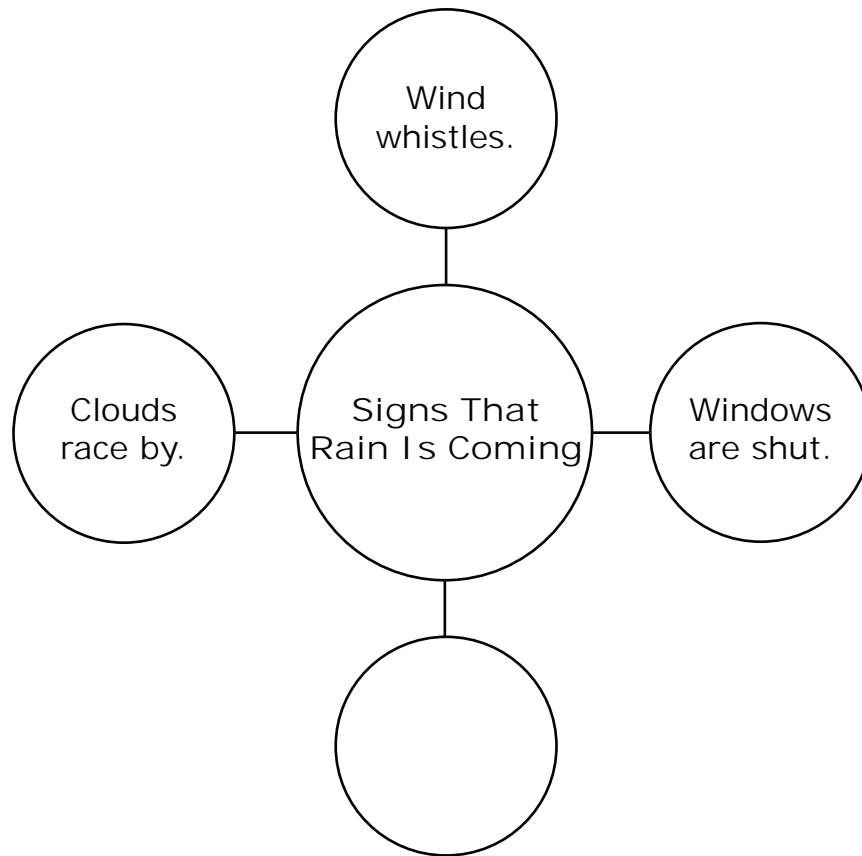
17. Why do the teachers most likely stop teaching class in lines 15–17?

- A.** The teachers hear the students whispering.
- B.** The heavy rain makes it difficult to hear the teachers.
- C.** The darkened room makes it difficult to teach.
- D.** The teachers want the students to rest.

- 18.** The poet uses repetition in lines 19–20 most likely to
- A.** establish a mysterious change in the weather.
 - B.** emphasize the power of the storm.
 - C.** create a peaceful mood in the classroom.
 - D.** contrast the sound of whispering and rain.
-

- 19.** How do the children most likely feel in lines 29–33?
- A.** Excited about the rain
 - B.** Content to go home
 - C.** Eager to fall asleep
 - D.** Tired of the rain

20. Study the diagram.



According to lines 1–12, which sentence belongs in the empty circle?

- A. Children run.
- B. Teachers whisper.
- C. Leaves shake.
- D. Classrooms empty.

- 21.** The effect of the children singing to the rain is that the rain
- A.** stops.
 - B.** ignores the request.
 - C.** sleeps.
 - D.** laughs at the request.
-

- 22.** Which sentence is the best summary of lines 13–23?
- A.** Students and teachers enjoy a rest.
 - B.** Students and teachers are tired at the end of the day.
 - C.** Teachers remind students to speak quietly.
 - D.** Students refuse to do their reading and writing.
-

- 23.** Which conclusion can readers make about the conversation in lines 29–41?
- A.** The rain has an important job to do.
 - B.** The teachers want the rain to stop.
 - C.** The rain will return to the school every day.
 - D.** The parents are worried that the rain will continue.

24. How does the speaker most likely feel in lines 42–43 of the poem?

- A.** The speaker is eager to play outdoors in the rain.
 - B.** The speaker has accepted that the rain will continue.
 - C.** The speaker is curious about what the rain has done.
 - D.** The speaker has stopped listening to the sound of the rain.
-

25. Which line from the poem gives the best hint about the main topic?

- A.** Line 2
- B.** Line 5
- C.** Line 6
- D.** Line 9

Reading Test — Segment 4

Read these stories about families. Then answer the questions. Some questions may ask you about certain paragraphs. The paragraphs are numbered on the left side.

Selection 1

Bread to Make

by Sue Vierung

- 1 Summer slid into autumn. School began and I went, not because it was the law, but because the window of my classroom faced the road, the road that would bring my father back to me.
- 2 September brought storms that swept the farm with flashes of light and with thunder that rumbled and roared as if it would crush us with its mighty voice.
- 3 Grandmother had no love for these storms. She sat, one white-knuckled hand gripping the wooden arm of the old rocker. Mending lay forgotten on her lap. As bolts of lightning ripped open the sky and thunder crashed down on us in wave after wave, her other hand would fly up and then fall to rest on the Bible lying on the table beside her. Her fear filled the room.
- 4 An afghan rested in ripples of brown and gold on the back of Grandmother's sofa. I laid it hesitantly across her lap. A small smile struggled across her face as if she knew she was too old to be the one who was afraid.
- 5 I sat at her feet, and light and fleeting as the touch of a butterfly, my hand touched her knee.
- 6 "Grandmother, have you ever seen the way trees seem to dance in a storm?" I began. As I talked, Grandmother's hand eased its death grip a little, and together we watched until the storm was just a whisper.
- 7 October became November. The dark came early now, and the cold. I was driven inside.
- 8 I was sleeping, dreaming deeply, when Grandmother's hand shook me awake.
- 9 I stumbled behind Grandmother down the stairs. In the warmth from the old wood stove, I put on the layers of clothes she handed to me. Once I was dressed to the last button and boot, Grandmother seemed satisfied.
- 10 Alive with curiosity, I followed her through the door. We stepped off the porch and into a white-lace world. Snow had fallen. While I slept, inches of snow silently gift-wrapped the world in icy beauty. Moonlight pushed its way through the

clouds, and blue shadows ribboned fields as lustrous as midday.

- 11 From the shed behind the house, Grandmother pulled out an old sled. Together, we walked to the top of the pasture.
- 12 "I could never wait until morning," she said as I sat down on the sled. Grandmother gave us a running push and scrambled on behind. Snow stung our cheeks in star-crystal kisses as we flew down the hill. Over and over we soared, the notes of our laughter a duet dancing behind us in the night air.
- 13 Finally we trudged up the hill and home.
- 14 Hot chocolate, thick with whipped cream, soon made me warm and sleepy. Before I went up the stairs, I wrapped my arms around my grandmother. We leaned together shyly.
- 15 "Thank you," I whispered.
- 16 In the morning I brushed the snow off the railing and sat, shivering a little in the wintry sunlight. I thought about my father and the note he left. I knew *soon* would not be today, and it probably would not be tomorrow.
- 17 Through the window I could see my grandmother. It was Saturday, and she was making bread. Her strong arms folded the dough over onto itself again and again.
- 18 I thought about this grandmother who had been there when my father was a boy and who was here for me now, who was present in all the small tasks of the day and in the magic of a moonlit ride.
- 19 With one last look at the road, I slid off my perch and slipped through the door. After all, there was bread to make.

Selection 2

Dumplings

by Meagan Nolan

- 20 I sigh and lean back in my chair asking, "How do I say aunt again?" My mom says "*Xiao Yi*," which sounds like "Shaw-ee" to me. I repeat clumsily, once, twice, three times. My mom gives me a proud smile but I'm pretty sure I sound more donkey than Chinese. My clumsy American tongue fumbles on the four different tones in Mandarin so I decide it's safest to stick with Aunt Shirley's American name.
- 21 "She should be here any minute," my mom says nervously while fiddling with her cooking apron. We drop the dumplings, mine included, into a pot of boiling water and wash our hands. I stand in front of the mirror, wondering what my Aunt will think when she first sees me. My hair is light brown, and my eyes are hazel. Try as I might, I can't see a speck of Chinese blood in my features, except for my almond-shaped eyes. I wonder if she is going to recognize me.
- 22 There's only time to brush my hair and try to air out the heavy smell of soy sauce from the house before the doorbell interrupts me. I feel nervous as I rush to the front door and yank it open. My mom follows close behind, smoothing back her hair while my dad rises to greet our guest. "*Ah, Wai Sheng Nu!*" The face of the woman at the door breaks into a huge smile and she embraces me. My Aunt Shirley could have been the twin of my mother. They have the same short black haircut, small stature, black-rimmed glasses, and oval face. They're standing together now, talking in rapid and incomprehensible Mandarin, their faces glowing identical with happiness.
- 23 We rush her to the dinner table, where there are six or seven courses waiting. During dinner, she continually leans over, taking my face in her hands, kissing my cheeks. I don't mind and smile. We eat our way through the white rice, tofu, stir-fried vegetables, noodles, *kung pao* chicken, and rice congee. Then comes the dumplings. I watch embarrassed as a few of my mutilated dumplings make their way into my aunt's bowl. My mom is talking in Chinese again. Suddenly my aunt is beaming. "You make *jiao zi*?" She asks in broken English, pointing at the dumplings. "The bad ones." I say. She seems to know what I mean, and lifts one with her chopsticks, placing it in her mouth. She mostly eats the ripped ones, the ones I made. She looks happier with each bite.

- 24 After dinner, she hands me a red and gold envelope filled with money and a green jade necklace. I hardly know how to express my gratitude, but I say "Thank-you, Aunt Shirley" in English. "*Bu ke qi*," she replies. We're silent, looking at each other, unable to communicate any further. A wave of sadness passes over me, that I can't understand Chinese, that I've never earnestly tried to connect with my mother's culture, that I haven't seen this woman for so long; I know so little. I wondered how it would be with my children, who would most likely be a quarter Chinese and would know even less than I do. Suddenly, I wanted, needed to be able to share my culture for generations. "*Xie Xie, Xiao Yi*," I say it again, this time translating to horribly accented Mandarin. Then I embraced my *Xiao Yi*. For once, I didn't just feel American. I know now that half of me is Chinese and always will be.

- 26.** Based on the story "Bread to Make," the narrator at times turns her attention to the outdoors because she
- A.** enjoys the sight of snow.
 - B.** hopes to see her father return home.
 - C.** prefers to be somewhere other than school.
 - D.** likes to watch her grandmother from a distance.
-

- 27.** In what time frame do the events in "Bread to Make" happen?
- A.** Weeks
 - B.** Days
 - C.** Months
 - D.** Years
-

- 28.** Read this sentence from paragraph 5.

I sat at her feet, and light and fleeting as the touch of a butterfly, my hand touched her knee.

The narrator compares her hand to a butterfly to show that

- A.** she is not afraid.
- B.** her touch is gentle.
- C.** she is sitting near her grandmother.
- D.** her grandmother cannot feel her touch.

29. Read this sentence from paragraph 6.

'Grandmother, have you ever seen the way trees seem to dance in a storm?' I began.

The narrator asks Grandmother this question most likely to

- A.** help her grandmother view storms in a different way.
 - B.** learn about storms over farmland.
 - C.** describe the landscape of the farm.
 - D.** avoid loneliness by talking with her grandmother.
-

30. In paragraph 20, the narrator's mother gives her a "proud smile" because the narrator

- A.** looks like her aunt.
 - B.** has told a joke in Chinese.
 - C.** repeats a term in Chinese.
 - D.** has made dumplings for her aunt.
-

31. Read this sentence from paragraph 22.

My Aunt Shirley could have been the twin of my mother.

This sentence means that Aunt Shirley and the narrator's mother

- A.** look alike.
- B.** are acting the same.
- C.** are close in age.
- D.** stand side by side.

- 32.** Based on her actions during dinner, the narrator's aunt most likely
- A.** is embarrassed by her poor English.
 - B.** is happy to see her niece again.
 - C.** thinks her niece looks like her sister.
 - D.** wants to make her own Chinese dumplings.
-

- 33.** Read this sentence from paragraph 24.

A wave of sadness passes over me, that I can't understand Chinese, that I've never earnestly tried to connect with my mother's culture, that I haven't seen this woman for so long; I know so little.

This sentence most clearly expresses that the narrator

- A.** feels unsure about her background.
 - B.** dreads her aunt's departure.
 - C.** regrets her lack of interest in her background.
 - D.** detects her aunt's sorrow.
-
- 34.** Which is the most likely reason that family members prepare a specific menu for the aunt?
- A.** A person from another country may hesitate to eat American foods.
 - B.** The narrator's mother wants to display her cooking skills.
 - C.** A Chinese dinner always consists of at least six courses.
 - D.** The narrator's parents want her aunt to feel at home.

35. Why does the narrator consider the dumplings she has made “bad ones”?

- A.** They have been boiled too long.
 - B.** They taste bad.
 - C.** They have been dropped.
 - D.** They are torn.
-

36. The narrators in both stories are similar because they both

- A.** reach an important understanding.
- B.** struggle with another character.
- C.** reach the end of a journey.
- D.** solve a problem.