READING COMPREHENSION

**PASSAGE .1**

A Streetcar Named Desire is a classic of the American theatre. Tennessee Williams’ landmark work was a tour de force in its original stage production in 1947 and continues to resonate with audiences and readers today despite or perhaps because of its simplistic though layered story. A faded Southern belle, Blanche DuBois, arrives at her sister’s seedy New Orleans apartment where she is tortured by her brutish brother-in-law, Stanley Kowalski. Blanche puts on airs of class and happiness throughout the play, though internally she is miserable and haunted by her tragic and scandalous past. Stanley forces Blanche to face her dolorous reality with his vitriol and, finally, his act of sexual aggression, and in doing so, he causes her to lose her tenuous grip on sanity. Most have argued (correctly) that the play is about the ways the past haunts our present or (again correctly) that it is about the ways class and sexuality impact our lives. However, few have seen the play for what it is: an allegory for the theatre itself. Before Williams wrote Streetcar, the theatre had been dominated by melodrama. A brief interlude in the 1930s brought political theatre to centre stage (pardon the pun), but by the 1940s, its principal playwright, Clifford Odets, had left New York for Hollywood, and the sensationalized and maudlin form of melodrama once again flourished. The theatre was in limbo, and Williams had a desire to bring something new to the world. It would bring the realism of the political theatre of the 1930s but without the political (read: socialist) underpinnings. To that end, he created lifelike characters who spoke in realistic dialect. But to make his point that melodrama was flawed, he added an equally unrealistic character. Blanche, unlike the other characters, speaks theatrically, acts larger than life on stage, and uses floral language and heightened mannerisms. Blanche is a character not to be trusted. She lies about everything, and the only thing that finally exposes her lies is reality itself: Stanley. He finally forces her off the stage and into the insane asylum by forcing himself on her sexually. And with that, realism forcibly removed melodrama from the stage.

It is not possible to imagine A Streetcar Named Desire without the influence of Marlon Brando, the actor who rose to fame playing Stanley Kowalski. On the page, the part is fairly simplistic. Stanley is a monster and a beast without any redeeming qualities. But Brando and the play’s original director, Elia Kazan, imagined the character as having a soft underbelly, rooted in his own sorrow, insecurities, and soulful complexity. Brando’s Stanley is a brute, yes, but he is a brute who hates the fact that he is so awful. He is also unable to control himself and his passions, and this lack of control is equally embarrassing to him, even as it is also threatening to Blanche and alluring to her sister Stella. For instance, after he hits Stella, he comes back to her, famously begging for forgiveness by shouting “Stella” outside their apartment. But in Brando’s depiction on the stage and later on the screen, he is soaked from the rain and looks completely desperate, as though he needs Stella to live. He looks and seems totally helpless and weak, the exact opposite of the brute he appears later when he forces himself onto Blanche. The play is excellent and memorable, even when read. But it is Brando’s interpretation of the male lead role that makes the play indelible. Without Brando, the play would still have a deep meaning, but with Brando’s interpretation, the play becomes even more profound.

**1) Paragraph 1 provides each of the following EXCEPT**

A. a critical interpretation of A Streetcar Named Desire

B. an explanation of why modern audiences connect with A Streetcar Named Desire

C. a brief plot synopsis of A Streetcar Named Desire

D. background information on the times that produced A Streetcar Named Desire

E. the author’s main argument concerning A Streetcar Named Desire

**2) It can be inferred from Passage  that A Streetcar Named Desire**

A. was Tennessee Williams’ first play

B. is better on stage than in print

C. did not have socialist leanings

D. was not melodramatic

E. would not have been successful without Marlon Brando

**3) According to Passage, the character of Blanche DuBois**

A. is intentionally overdramatic and theatrical

B. has never been to the city of New Orleans before

C. is recently married to Stanley Kowalski

D. is brutally honest and frank during the play

E. is firmly rooted in realism and sanity

**4) Paragraph 2 argues that Marlon Brando’s portrayal of Stanley Kowalski**

 I. earned the actor great

II. is more nuanced than the part that is written

III. is what really made A Streetcar Named Desire a classic

A. I only B. II only

C. I and II only

D. II and III only

E. I, II, and III

**5) Both Paragraph 1 and Paragraph 2 argue that**

A. the New York theatre scene was blown away by A Streetcar Named Desire

B. Tennessee Williams wrote A Streetcar Named Desire to end melodrama

C. A Streetcar Named Desire has more than one true meaning

D. A Streetcar Named Desire only has power when performed on the stage

E. the character of Stanley Kowalski is simply a brute monster

**PASSAGE .2**

Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy Concussions are brain injuries that occur when a person receives a blow to the head, face, or neck. Although most people who suffer a concussion experience initial bouts of dizziness, nausea, and drowsiness, these symptoms often disappear after a few days. The long-term effects of concussions, however, are less understood and far more severe. Recent studies suggest that people who suffer multiple concussions are at a significant risk for developing chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), a degenerative brain disorder that causes a variety of dangerous mental and emotional problems to arise weeks, months, or even years after the initial injury. These psychological problems can include depression, anxiety, memory loss, inability to concentrate, and aggression. In extreme cases, people suffering from CTE have even committed suicide or homicide. The majority of people who develop these issues are athletes who participate in popular high-impact sports, especially football. Although both new sports regulations and improvements in helmet technology can help protect players, the sports media and fans alike bear some of the responsibility for reducing the incidence of these devastating injuries.

Improvements in diagnostic technology have provided substantial evidence to link severe and often fatal psychological disorders to the head injuries players receive while on the field. Recent autopsies performed on the brains of football players who have committed suicide have shown advanced cases of CTE in every single victim.

 In response to the growing understanding of this danger, the National Football League (NFL) has revised its safety regulations. Players who have suffered a head injury on the field must undergo a "concussion sideline assessment" a series of mental and physical fitness tests before being allowed back in the game. In an effort to diminish the amount of head and neck injuries on the field, NFL officials have begun enforcing stricter penalty calls for helmet-to-helmet contact, leading with the head, and hitting a defenceless player. Furthermore, as of 2010, if a player’s helmet is accidentally wrenched from his head during play, the ball is immediately whistled dead. There is hope that these new regulations, coupled with advances in helmet design, will reduce the number of concussions player endure, and thus curb the number of CTE cases. Efforts by the NFL and other professional sports leagues are certainly **laudable** indeed, we should commend every attempt to protect the mental and physical health of players. However, new regulations at the professional level cannot protect amateur players, especially young people. Fatal cases of CTE have been reported in victims as young as 21. With appropriate equipment and form, tackling need not be dangerous. Proper tackling form using the arms and shoulders to aim for a player’s midsection rather than leading with the top of the head should be taught at an early age. Youth, high school, and college leagues should also adopt safety rules even more stringent that the NFL’s. Furthermore, at an early age, athletes should be educated about the serious dangers of head injuries.

 Perhaps the most important factor in reducing the number of traumatic brain injuries, however, lies not with the players, the coaches, or the administrators, but with the media and fans. Sports media producers have become accustomed to showcasing the most aggressive tackles and the most intense plays. NFL broadcasts often replay especially violent collisions, while the commentators marvel at the physical prowess of the players involved. Some sports programs even feature weekly countdowns of the hardest hits. When the media exalts such hazardous behaviour, professionals are rewarded for injuring each other on the field, and amateurs become more likely to try to imitate their favourite NFL athletes. Announcers, commentators, television producers, and sportswriters should engage in a collective effort to cease glorifying brutal plays. In turn, fans should stop expecting their favourite players to put their lives on the line for the purposes of entertainment. Players must stop being encouraged to trade their careers, health, happiness, and their lives for the sake of a game.

**1) The author apparently believes that**

A. NFL officials have not thoroughly implemented stricter safety regulations

B. doctors need to do more research about the potential long-term effects of CTE

C. amateur athletes suffer more serious long-term effects of CTE than professional athletes

D. fans share some of the blame for athletes’ injuries

E. young people should not be encouraged to play football due to CTE risks

**2) According to the author, each of the following statements are true EXCEPT which one?**

A. Tackling itself is not dangerous; however, players who use improper tackling form may suffer injury.

B. Scientists have established a link between players who shoot themselves and others and the onset of CTE.

C. NFL officials have done nothing to address the problem of CTE.

D. Athletes who are praised for exceptionally brutal hits are likely to continue engaging in such dangerous behavior. E. Sports programs showcase exceptionally hard hits.

**3) According to the author, which of the following contribute(s) to an increase in incidences of CTE in amateur players?**

I. fewer safety regulations than professional players

II. A lack of education geared to youth players about the dangers of head injuries

III. A desire to emulate professionals

A. I only

B. II only

C. I and II only

D. II and III only

E. I, II, and III

**4) Which is the best synonym for laudable**

A. praiseworthy

B. ineffective

C. determined

D. blameworthy

E. satisfactory

**5) The author’s tone in the final paragraph can best be described as**

A. apologetic

B. depressed

C. confused

D. solemn

E. hopeless

**6) As used in the final paragraph, which is the best antonym for exalts?**

A. ignores

B. misrepresents

C. praises

D. reports

E. criticizes

**7) In the final paragraph, the author writes, “Players must stop being encouraged to trade their careers, health, happiness, and their lives for the sake of a game.” Which of the following literary devices is used in this quotation?**

A. Irony, characterized by the expression of something which is contrary to the intended meaning.

B. Climax, characterized by the arrangement of words, phrases, or causes in an order of ascending power.

C. Litotes, characterized by the expression of understatement used for intensification of a rhetorical purpose.

D. Hyperbole, characterized by the use of exaggeration for emphasis or rhetorical effect.

E. Apostrophe characterized by a sudden turn from addressing the general audience to addressing a specific person, group, or personified abstraction.