**Storyline Task Question**

**Scenario:**

You have been given a dataset for a small company’s employee management system. The dataset includes a table called employees with the following columns:

* employee\_id (INT) – Unique identifier for each employee
* name (VARCHAR) – Employee’s name
* department (VARCHAR) – Department where the employee works
* salary (DECIMAL) – Employee’s salary
* hire\_date (DATE) – Date when the employee was hired

**Task:**

1. **Retrieve Basic Employee Information:**
   * Write a query to list the employee\_id, name, and department for all employees.
2. **Count of Employees:**
   * Find out how many employees are in the employees table.
3. **Distinct Departments:**
   * Get a list of unique departments where employees work.
4. **Total Salary Expense:**
   * Calculate the total sum of all employees’ salaries.
5. **Average Salary:**
   * Determine the average salary of all employees.
6. **Highest and Lowest Salary:**
   * Find the maximum and minimum salary among employees.
7. **Employees with High Salary:**
   * List employees who have a salary greater than $60,000.
8. **Recent Hires:**
   * List the names and hire dates of employees who were hired after June 1, 2023.
9. **Department-Specific Salary Range:**
   * Show the names and salaries of employees who work in the 'Engineering' department and have a salary between $50,000 and $70,000.
10. **Sorted Employees by Salary:**
    * Display the names of employees ordered by their salary in descending order.
11. **Employee Count by Department:**
    * Count how many employees are there in each department and display the results in ascending order of department names.
12. **Null Hire Dates:**
    * Find and list the names of employees who do not have a hire date (i.e., hire\_date is NULL).

**Instructions:**

* Write the SQL queries for each of the tasks above.
* Make sure to use the appropriate SQL functions and clauses where required.
* Ensure your queries are well-formatted and easy to read.

**Expected Outcomes:**

* Provide the SQL queries along with sample results for each task.
* Explain how each query addresses the specific task and any assumptions made.

This storyline task will help a novice practice various SQL functions and clauses while understanding how to extract meaningful information from a database.