# End-of-Year Assessment—Reading Comprehension

*You will read three selections. After reading the first selection, you will answer several questions based on it. Then, you will read the second selection and answer several questions based on it. Finally, you will read the third selection and answer several questions based on it. Some of the questions have two parts. You should answer Part A of the question before you answer Part B.*

## Passage 1: "Mercury and the Woodman," by Aesop

1 A poor Woodman was cutting down a tree near the edge of a deep pool in the forest. It was late in the day and the Woodman was tired. He had been working since sunrise and his strokes were not so sure as they had been early that morning. Thus it happened that the axe slipped and flew out of his hands into the pool.

2 The Woodman was in despair. The axe was all he possessed with which to make a living, and he had not money enough to buy a new one. As he stood wringing his hands and weeping, the god Mercury suddenly appeared and asked what the trouble was. The Woodman told him what had happened, and straightway the kind Mercury dived into the pool. When he came up again, he held a wonderful golden axe.

3 "Is this your axe?" Mercury asked the Woodman.

4 "No," answered the honest Woodman, "that is not my axe."

5 Mercury laid the golden axe on the bank and sprang back into the pool. This time he brought up an axe of silver, but the Woodman declared again that his axe was just an ordinary one with a wooden handle.

6 Mercury dived down for the third time, and when he came up again, he had the very axe that had been lost.

7 The poor Woodman was very glad that his axe had been found and could not thank the kind god enough. Mercury was greatly pleased with the Woodman's honesty.

8 "I admire your honesty," he said, "and as a reward you may have all three axes, the gold and the silver as well as your own."

9 The happy Woodman returned to his home with his treasures, and soon the story of his good fortune was known to everybody in the village. Now there were several Woodmen in the village who believed that they could easily win the same good fortune. They hurried out into the woods, one here, one there, and hiding their axes in the bushes, pretended they had lost them. Then they wept and wailed and called on Mercury to help them.

10 And indeed, Mercury did appear, first to this one, then to that. To each one he showed an axe of gold, and each one eagerly claimed it to be the one he had lost. But Mercury did not give them the golden axe. Oh no! Instead he gave them each a hard whack over the head with it and sent them home. And when they returned the next day to look for their own axes, they were nowhere to be found.

11 *Honesty is the best policy*.

*Questions 1–5 pertain to Passage 1: "Mercury and the Woodman," by Aesop.*

1. Explain why the axe slipped and flew out of the Woodman's hands into the pool.

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2. *Despair* means the feeling of having lost hope that something will improve. Why was the Woodman in despair?

   A. He didn't finish cutting down the tree he had started cutting down.

   B. He didn't want to tell Mercury what had happened.

   C. He wanted the golden axe.

   D. He didn't know how he would get his axe back.

   Answer _____

*The following question has two parts. Answer Part A and then answer Part B.*

3. **Part A**: How did the Woodman show honesty, or the quality of being fair and truthful? Find two examples in the text and type them in the following chart.

| **The Woodman showed honesty by:** |
| --- |
| |
| |

**Part B**: What could the Woodman have done that would not have shown honesty?

4. What good fortune did the other Woodmen in the village hope to easily win?

   A. getting a golden axe and a silver axe in addition to their own

   B. losing their own axes in the pool in the forest

   C. returning the next day to find their hidden axes

   D. showing honesty to Mercury when he asked what the trouble was

   Answer _____

5. The moral of the story is "Honesty is the best policy." Explain what this moral means, using evidence from the text.

## Passage 2: "Benjamin Banneker"

1 Imagine that you are given an old-fashioned pocket watch. Because you are a curious person and you are interested in how the watch works, you take it apart. Looking at the array of watch parts, you have an idea. Is it possible to use the watch as a model and build a large clock with the same kinds of working parts? It sounds like it could work, but where will you begin? How will you enlarge the design of the watch to build the clock? What materials will you use for the clock parts? It sounds challenging, doesn't it? Believe it or not, a man named Benjamin Banneker accomplished this task in 1753—more than 250 years ago. And he did it without the use of modern tools or technology. He built the clock from wood, and he carefully carved each of the gears. That clock ran for more than 40 years and kept almost perfect time. Benjamin Banneker used his brilliant mind in this and other ways to examine and improve the world around him.

2 Benjamin Banneker was born near Baltimore, Maryland, in 1731. Many African Americans were enslaved during this time in American history, but Benjamin was born a free man. Benjamin grew up on his family's farm. When he was young, his grandmother taught him to read. Later, Benjamin went to a nearby school where he showed great skill in mathematics and science. Benjamin's schooling did not last long, however, because he was needed on the family farm. While working on the farm, Benjamin created an irrigation system that allowed crops to be watered even during dry times. The irrigation system was made up of ditches and small dams. The system controlled water that flowed from springs near the farm.

3 Banneker was in his early 20s when he built his famous clock. But that accomplishment didn't satisfy his curiosity about the world around him. He continued to learn and grow. When he was older, Banneker began to teach himself astronomy. Astronomy is the study of the sun, moon, stars, planets, and other bodies in space. This area of study fascinated Banneker. He loved astronomy so much that he built a cabin with a skylight. Through this window in the roof, he could observe the sky during the day and at night. Banneker used his observations to record the weather and the appearance of stars in the sky. He used his outstanding mathematical abilities to calculate the tides and correctly predict eclipses of the sun and the moon.

4 Benjamin Banneker decided to create an almanac in which he would publish all the useful information that he gathered. Each year between 1792 and 1797, Banneker published an almanac that included all of his astronomical calculations and weather predictions. Readers used the facts in their daily lives. They also enjoyed the puzzles, health tips, and advice on farming that were included in the pages.

5 Benjamin Banneker's abilities were outstanding. People who knew him thought he could put his skills to use in other areas. Thomas Jefferson was among those who were made aware of Banneker's talents. At that time, Jefferson was secretary of state under President George Washington. Jefferson requested that Banneker be made part of a group that was planning the design for the nation's capital. In 1791, Banneker was made an assistant to Major Andrew Ellicott. Major Ellicott was the man appointed by President Washington to lay out the boundaries for the area. Banneker used his mathematical abilities to help plan the way that Washington, D.C., would look in the years to come.

6 In 1791, Banneker also sent a copy of the manuscript for his first almanac to Thomas Jefferson. Along with the almanac manuscript, Banneker included a letter to Jefferson that expressed how he felt about slavery. Banneker felt that slavery should be abolished, or ended, and that the abilities of African Americans like himself should be recognized. Jefferson reacted favorably to the almanac and responded to Banneker's comments politely. However, it would be years before slavery was abolished in the United States.

7 As Banneker grew older, he continued to observe the natural world around him and to support the anti-slavery movement. He had become well-known and widely respected, and he often enjoyed visits from scientists and others who admired his work. Benjamin Banneker died at his home in 1806. Today the contributions of this farmer, scientist, mathematician, astronomer, writer, and city planner are recognized around the world. In 1980, the U.S. Postal Service remembered the contributions of Benjamin Banneker by issuing a stamp in his honor.

*Questions 6–9 pertain to Passage 2: "Benjamin Banneker."*

6. Knowing what Banneker accomplished in his life, what does the word *outstanding* mean in the following sentence from paragraph 5?

> Benjamin Banneker's abilities were outstanding.

A. unpaid

B. excellent

C. poor

D. average

Answer _____

*The following question has two parts. Answer Part A and then answer Part B.*

7. **Part A**: Benjamin Banneker was curious about the world around him. Using evidence from the text, fill in the column labeled "Part A: What Benjamin Banneker built or made."

| Part A: What Benjamin Banneker built or made | Part B: Why he built or made this |
|---|---|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

**Part B**: Now that you have identified things Banneker built or made, use evidence in the text to help you determine why he built or made these things. Record your answers for why Banneker built each item in the column labeled "Part B: Why he built or made this."

8. In paragraph 6, the text states the following:

> Jefferson reacted favorably to the almanac and responded to Banneker's comments politely.

Using evidence from the text, explain why Jefferson might have reacted favorably to the almanac and why he might have responded to Banneker's comments politely.

9. In paragraph 5, the author states that Thomas Jefferson was aware of Banneker's talents and requested that Banneker be made part of a group that was planning the design for the nation's capital. Using information from the text, explain why Thomas Jefferson might have requested that Banneker be part of an important group planning the design of the nation's capital.

## Passage 3: "The Circulatory System"

1 If you have ever cut your finger or scraped your knee, you know what your own blood looks like. But have you ever wondered why you need blood or how your blood travels through your body? Long ago, people did not know a lot about blood. For example, it was once thought that bloodletting, or taking blood from a person, would help a sick person. People thought bloodletting would allow a disease to flow out of a person who was ill. Today we know this is not true. Modern scientists and medical professionals have learned a great deal more about blood. They have also learned more about the way blood moves through the body.

2 Blood has many important jobs in the body. It carries life-giving oxygen to body cells and removes carbon dioxide. Blood also moves nutrients from food to body tissues, and it carries away waste products. Some cells in blood help protect the body against disease. Blood also helps distribute heat throughout the body. In addition, it carries the hormones that a body needs to grow and function.

3 Your blood moves through your body along a network called the circulatory system. The circulatory system is made up of the heart, blood vessels, and blood itself. At one time, it was thought that blood was constantly being made and used up in the body. This idea came from an ancient Greek physician, or doctor, named Galen. Galen believed that the food we eat was turned into blood in the liver. He thought that blood flowed through the veins into the body where it was used up. Then new blood would be made. In the 1600s an English physician named William Harvey proved that this was not true.

4 William Harvey was a physician at a hospital in London, England. He was also a doctor to two English kings. Harvey observed blood flow in animals and in the bodies of humans. He confirmed that the heart is an organ that pumps blood through the body. He discovered that blood vessels have valves in them that stop the blood from flowing back the wrong way. In 1628, Harvey published a book that explained how blood is pumped from the heart through the body and then returned to the heart again. His paper proved that blood was circulated over and over again in the body. Harvey also explained the pulse we feel in our bodies. He said the pulse is caused by blood vessels that expand, or grow larger, each time the heart contracts and sends out blood. Harvey's work changed the way doctors thought of the heart and blood vessels.

5 So just how does the circulatory system work? Let's begin with the heart and blood vessels. The heart is a muscular organ that is about the size of a person's fist. It pushes blood out when it contracts, or squeezes together, and it pulls blood in when it relaxes. The blood vessels make up the "pipeline" through which blood flows. You have so many blood vessels in your body, they could circle the earth more than two times if they were strung together! There are different kinds of blood vessels. Arteries are large blood vessels that carry blood away from the heart. The arteries take blood to tiny blood vessels called capillaries. The capillaries are the connections between arteries and veins. Veins are the blood vessels that take blood back to the heart.

6 Blood itself is made up of liquid and solid particles. The liquid is called plasma. Plasma is made mostly of water, proteins, and minerals. The solids in blood are called red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets. The red blood cells carry oxygen and carbon dioxide. The white blood cells protect the body from disease and infection. Platelets help the blood clot. Without the clotting substances in platelets, blood would keep flowing from a wound and a person might bleed to death.

7 What happens during blood circulation? The heart pumps blood to the lungs where the blood mixes with oxygen. The blood then goes back to the heart again and is pumped through the arteries to the capillaries. As the blood travels through the capillaries, oxygen and nutrients are delivered to body tissues. The blood also picks up carbon dioxide and other waste products that the body does not need. The blood crosses through the capillaries into the veins. Now it's on its way back to the heart. When the blood reaches the heart, it is pumped into the lungs. In the lungs, carbon dioxide is removed from the blood and fresh oxygen is mixed with the blood again. Other waste products have already been removed from the blood along the way by the liver and the kidneys.

8 Your heart, blood, and blood vessels do an amazing job of making sure your body stays strong, healthy, and alive. And they do it in a very short time. It might seem that it would take hours or even days for blood to circulate through your body. But it takes less than a minute. The circulatory system is one of the most important systems in your body. The next time you feel your pulse or hear your heartbeat, remember how hard your circulatory system is working for you!

*Questions 10–15 pertain to Passage 3: "The Circulatory System."*

10. In paragraph 5, what does the following sentence mean?

> You have so many blood vessels in your body, they could circle the earth more than two times if they were strung together!

A. If you took all the blood vessels from your body and put them together in one long string, you could wrap that string around the earth more than two times.

B. If you took all the blood from your body and put it in one place, it would wrap around the earth more than two times.

C. If you took all the blood vessels from your body, each one is long enough to circle the earth on its own more than two times.

D. If you took all the blood vessels from your body and put them together in one long string, you could wrap that string around the earth less than two times.

Answer _____

*The following question has two parts. Answer Part A and then answer Part B.*

11. **Part A**: List the important jobs blood has in the body in the following chart.

| Important Jobs Blood Has in the Body |
|---|
| |
| |
| |
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| |

**Part B**: Using information from the chart, type complete sentences to give at least two reasons why blood is important to the body.

12. Which blood vessels carry blood away from the heart and which blood vessels carry blood back to the heart?

    A. Veins carry blood away from the heart; arteries carry blood back to the heart.

    B. Veins carry blood away from the heart; capillaries carry blood back to the heart.

    C. Arteries carry blood away from the heart; capillaries carry blood back to the heart.

    D. Arteries carry blood away from the heart; veins carry blood back to the heart.

    Answer _____

13. Which of the following shows the correct sequence of where blood goes when it circulates through the body?

    A. heart → lungs → heart → veins → capillaries → arteries → heart

    B. heart → lungs → heart → arteries → capillaries → veins → heart

    C. lungs → veins → heart → capillaries → veins → heart → lungs

    D. lungs → arteries → heart → capillaries → veins → heart → lungs

    Answer _____

*The following question has two parts. Answer Part A and then answer Part B.*

14. **Part A**: Fill in the following chart comparing the physicians Galen and Harvey and their beliefs.

| | How Blood Is Used in the Body | Where Blood Starts before Going through the Body |
|---|---|---|
| Galen | | |
| Harvey | | |

**Part B**: Using information from the chart and information from the text, explain how Harvey's work changed the way doctors thought about the heart and blood vessels.

15. In paragraph 8, the text states that it might seem like it would take hours or days for blood to circulate through your body. Using evidence from the passage, explain why it might seem that blood would take so long to circulate through your body.

*End-of-Year Reading Comprehension total _____ /15 points*

*To receive a point for a two-part question (i.e., 3, 7, 11, and 14), students must correctly answer both parts of the question.*