English Language Arts

Reading Comprehension

DIRECTIONS

This session contains three reading selections with twenty-one multiple-choice questions and three open-response questions. Mark your answers to these questions in the spaces provided in your Student Answer Booklet.

On April 14, 1912, the passenger ship R.M.S. Titanic *hit an iceberg in the North Atlantic Ocean and sank. Robert Ballard led a search for the sunken ship in 1985. At the beginning of this selection, Ballard and his team are nearing the end of their scheduled time at sea. Read the selection and answer the questions that follow.*

from Exploring the Titanic

by Robert D. Ballard

1 Then we had only five days left to go. The crunch had come. Suddenly the ocean seemed huge, and our doubts began to grow. Was the *Titanic* really in our carefully plotted search area? If so, surely something would have shown up on our monitor screens by now. Were we looking in the wrong place? Would we return empty-handed? I began to feel a rising panic.

2 In a last-ditch effort, we decided to check out a tiny portion of ocean bottom that Jean-Louis and his SAR sonar system had missed because of strong currents. We headed to that spot ten miles away.

3 But as we began to tow *Argo*[1] back and forth across the new search area, our hopes really began to fade. There was nothing down there. By now the routine inside our control room had become mind-numbing: hour after hour of staring at video images of flat bottom mud. On top of that, we were exhausted. The strain of it all was getting to us, and the boredom was becoming unbearable. Then, with a bad turn in the weather and only four days left, we reached our lowest point. I began to face total defeat.

A photograph of the *Argo* as it works underwater

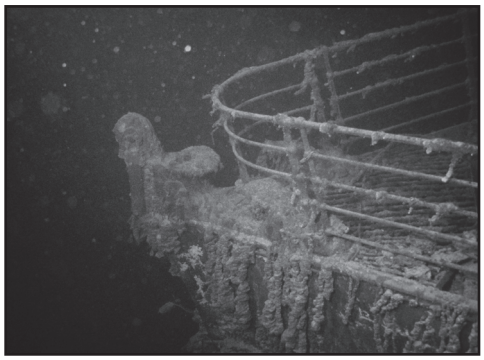
4 Just after midnight, on September 1, I went to my bunk for some rest, and the night shift led by Jean-Louis manned their stations. About an hour into their watch, one of the team members asked the others, "What are we going to do to keep ourselves awake tonight?" All they'd seen so far was mud and more mud, endless miles of nothing. Stu Harris, who was busy flying *Argo*, didn't answer. His eyes were glued to the *Argo* video monitor.

5 "There's something," he said, pointing to the screen. Suddenly every member of the sleepy watch was alive and alert. No one could believe it wasn't just another

[1] *Argo* — the underwater vessel that contained a video camera

false alarm, or a joke. But, no, there on the screen were clear images of things man-made. Stu yelled, "Bingo!" The control room echoed with a loud "Yeah!" from the whole team, and then wild shrieks and war-whoops. All sorts of wreckage began to stream by on the screen. Then something different appeared — something large and perfectly round. Jean-Louis checked in a book of pictures of the *Titanic*. He came across a picture of the ship's massive boilers, used to burn coal and drive the engines. He couldn't believe his eyes. He looked from book to video screen and back again. Yes, it was the same kind of boiler!

6 I scrambled out of my bunk when I got the news and ran to the control room. We replayed the tape of the boiler. I didn't know what to say. I turned to Jean-Louis. The look in his eyes said everything. The *Titanic* had been found. We'd been right all along. Then he said softly, "It was not luck. We earned it."



Wreckage of the *Titanic*

7 Our hunt was almost over. Somewhere very near us lay the R.M.S. *Titanic*.

8 Word had spread throughout the ship. People were pouring into the control room. The place was becoming a madhouse. Everyone was shaking hands and hugging and slapping each other on the back.

9 It was now almost two in the morning, very close to the exact hour of the *Titanic*'s sinking. Someone pointed to the clock on the wall. All of a sudden the room became silent.

10 Here at the bottom of the ocean lay not only the graveyard of a great ship, but of more than 1,500 people who had gone down with her. And we were the very first people in seventy-three years to come to this spot to pay our respects. Images from the night of the disaster — a story I now knew by heart — flashed through my mind.

11 Out on the stern of the *Knorr*,[2] people had started to gather for a few moments of silence in memory of those who had died on the *Titanic*. The sky was filled with stars; the sea was calm. We raised the Harland & Wolff flag, the emblem of the shipyard in Belfast, Ireland, that had built the great liner. Except for the shining moon overhead, it was just like the night when the *Titanic* had gone down. I could see her as she slipped nose first into the glassy water. Around me were the ghostly shapes of lifeboats and the piercing shouts and screams of passengers and crew freezing to death in the water.

12 Our little memorial service lasted about ten minutes. Then I just said, "Thank you all. Now let's get back to work."

[2] *Knorr* — the research ship used by Robert Ballard

1 According to the selection, how did crew members make certain that they had found the correct ship?

A. They sent a diver down to explore the wreckage.

B. They compared what they saw to old photographs.

C. They had an expert examine the items they picked up.

D. They saw the name of the ship on a piece of wreckage.

2 What is the **most likely** reason paragraph 7 is so short?

A. to suggest the narrator's doubts

B. to show how little time was left

C. to show the narrator's exhaustion

D. to highlight the drama of the event

3 Based on paragraphs 9 and 10, which reason **best** explains why "the room became silent"?

A. The crew members realized they had a lot of work left to do.

B. The crew members did not want to wake others who were asleep.

C. The crew members were thinking about the tragedy of the *Titanic*.

D. The crew members were not certain that they actually found the *Titanic*.

4 Read the sentences from paragraph 11 in the box below.

> . . . it was just like the night when the *Titanic* had gone down. I could see her as she slipped nose first into the glassy water. Around me were the ghostly shapes of lifeboats and the piercing shouts and screams of passengers and crew freezing to death in the water.

Which of the following **best** describes the sentences?

A. The narrator is watching a movie.

B. The narrator is imagining the scene.

C. The narrator is remembering his past.

D. The narrator is reading about an event.

5 Based on paragraphs 1 and 2, what is a "last-ditch effort"?

A. a deep dive into unexplored areas

B. a plan to do something dangerous

C. a final try to accomplish something

D. a way to correct a previous mistake

Read the passage about an amazing animal and answer the questions that follow.

Flying Frog

Glider in the Treetops

by Cynthia Bix and Diana Landau

1 In 1869, the British naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace was tromping through the rainforests of Borneo when a local man brought him a surprising animal specimen. It was a large tree frog that Wallace later described as having "come down, in a slanting direction, from a high tree, as if it flew."

2 Wallace was fascinated. Examining the frog, he found "the toes very long and fully webbed to their very extremity, so that when expanded they offered a surface much larger than that of the body." He concluded that this was the first known case of a "flying frog."

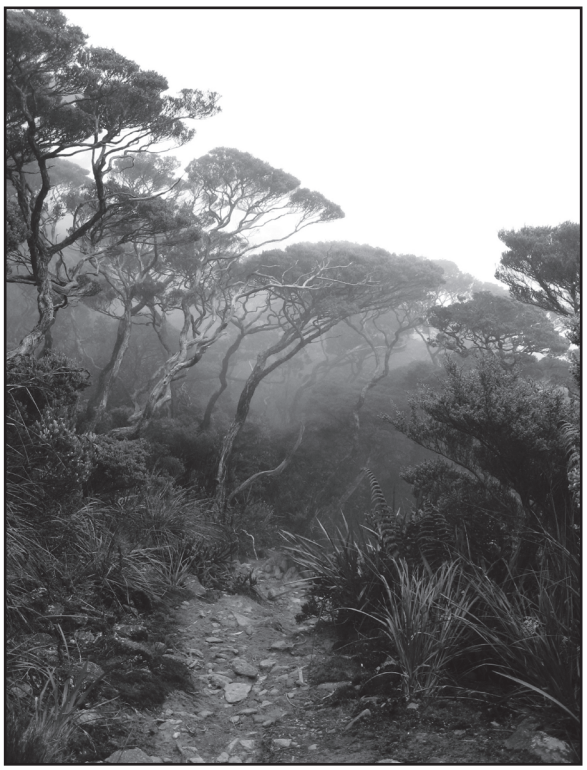
3 These frogs don't truly fly, as birds or bats do. What they do is glide—somewhat like humans piloting a hang glider. In hang gliding, the pilot jumps off a cliff or hilltop and sails through the air at a gradual downward slant, held aloft by lightweight "wings" strapped to a harness. The pilot controls the craft by shifting his or her weight, or by changing the angle of the wings.

4 Flying frogs do much the same thing. With powerful hind legs they launch their lightweight bodies from a high branch into the air. They spread out their large webbed feet and hands, as well as special flaps of skin on their legs and arms. These membranes of skin act like miniature parachutes to slow the frog's descent.

5 Some flying frogs glide as far as 40 or 50 feet as they descend by stages from the treetops to vegetation lower down. For these little animals, gliding is an energy-efficient way to get quickly from one place to another. By moving its legs or twisting its toes, the flying frog can even turn as it glides, so it can land to the right or left of its original direction of launch.

A Bornean flying frog, its foot webs stretched wide for a parachute effect, glides down for a soft landing on a fern.

6 The world in which these airborne frogs make their home is the rich and varied rainforest of Borneo, a large island that is part of Indonesia. Here, huge trees reach 100 feet into the air. Their leafy tops meet and mingle in a dense umbrella of green, casting the forest floor, or understory, into dim green shade. Up in the sunlit canopy thrives a colorful community of fruits and flowers, birds, animals, and insects—some of which never come down to the ground. Up here the flying frog finds plenty of insects to feed on, and plenty of moisture from the frequent rains that fall on the canopy.



Trees are spaced quite widely, so the flying frogs may glide up to 50 feet.

7 Like other tree frogs, the flying frog is uniquely adapted for its arboreal* life. Its feet have large, round toe pads that help it climb and cling to vertical surfaces. Though many people assume that these pads adhere by suction, they actually have tiny specialized cells that can penetrate microscopic cracks and irregularities in tree trunks and branches. The pads also have glands that produce a sticky secretion to help the frog hold tight—sort of like the "stickum" that football players once used to catch passes.

8 The frogs' long legs also aid in climbing; the strong hind legs propel their leaps through the trees. Their large, well-developed eyes help them navigate through the canopy and track down insect prey. Scientists believe frogs have good depth and color perception, as well as the ability to see in all directions at once. They can spot an insect's slightest movement, even in the dark.

9 Frogs have a unique ability to regulate their body temperature by changing the color of their skin. Because the tree frog endures greater extremes of light and temperature than its pond-dwelling relatives, it can change even more than other frogs. Light colors reflect heat, so the frog's skin may get lighter in hot, bright sunshine. When temperatures drop or when it gets dark, the frog's skin grows darker to absorb warmth. These changes are caused by the movements of various pigments within the skin cells.

10 Color changes also provide camouflage. In response to signals from its hormones or nervous system, the frog's color may change to match that of the mottled brown bark or the bright green leaf it's sitting on. Then predators such as owls or monkeys are less likely to see it. If one does spot it, the flying frog can often glide to safety.

11 One of the few times the little frogs come down from the canopy is to breed. Their eggs, like those of all frogs, must hatch near water where the tadpoles can begin their development into adult frogs.

* *arboreal* — of or like a tree; living in trees

12 The flying frog is a fascinating example of an animal that has taken its family traits to extremes in adapting to its special environment. With its parachute-like feet and extra-streamlined body, it swoops through the rainforest canopy while other frogs make their way along the ground and through the water.

13 But like all inhabitants of the world's rainforests, the flying frog faces the threat of displacement from its natural habitat. As more and more forest is cleared for human use, and as the effects of pollution trickle into what forest is left, the frogs may face an uncertain future. One of only about a dozen kinds of flying frogs in the world, this agile creature is a valuable member of the rainforest's community of wonders.

Flying frogs cling to tree trunks and other surfaces with their large feet and round, sticky toe pads.

14 The flying frog's skin performs many functions. Instead of drinking water, frogs absorb it through thin skin on their abdomen, called a "pelvic patch." And besides breathing through their lungs, they draw in oxygen and release carbon dioxide through their skin. To do this the skin must stay moist, a job performed by mucous-producing glands. The mucous also gives the skin a slippery film that protects against bacteria and helps the frog give predators "the slip."

14 How do the authors **mainly** introduce the subject in paragraphs 1 and 2?

A. They compare different types of flying frogs.

B. They question some myths about flying frogs.

C. They highlight extraordinary abilities of flying frogs.

D. They describe one of the earliest discoveries of flying frogs.

15 How does the explanation of hang gliding in paragraph 3 **most** help the reader?

A. It compares frogs' flight to something that people do.

B. It explains how flying frogs descended from birds and bats.

C. It shows what human pilots can learn by studying frogs' flight.

D. It contrasts the abilities of flying frogs to those of birds and bats.

16 What is the **main** purpose of the first photograph of the Bornean flying frog?

A. to highlight how tiny the frog is

B. to demonstrate how the frog moves

C. to show the frog in its natural setting

D. to compare the frog to another species

17 What does the information in paragraph 6 **mainly** suggest about Borneo's rainforest canopy?

A. It is remote and has rarely been studied.

B. It supports a variety of plants and wildlife.

C. It includes few species that live on and under the ground.

D. It has seen rapid changes in climate and animal populations.

18 Based on the passage, tree frogs protect themselves from enemies **mainly** by

A. snaring them in traps.

B. frightening them away.

C. producing poison to kill them.

D. using camouflage to hide from them.

19 What is the **main** purpose of paragraph 13?

A. to present expert opinions about flying frogs

B. to raise concerns about the survival of flying frogs

C. to describe how flying frogs may adapt in the future

D. to explain why flying frogs receive so much attention

20 Read the descriptions from the passage in the box below.

- . . . they launch their lightweight bodies from a high branch . . .
- . . . the strong hind legs propel their leaps through the trees.
- . . . the flying frog can often glide to safety.
- . . . it swoops through the rainforest canopy . . .

In the descriptions, what do the words "launch," "propel," "glide," and "swoops" **mainly** show about the frogs?

A. how they move through the air

B. how they differ from other species

C. how they behave when under attack

D. how they change speed in different situations

21 How is the information in the passage **mainly** organized?

A. as steps in a process

B. in chronological order

C. in order of importance

D. by topic with supporting details

22 Based on paragraphs 1 and 2, a *naturalist* is **most likely** a person who

A. explores unknown areas.

B. captures animals for zoos.

C. studies animals and plants.

D. makes amazing discoveries.

23 Read the sentence from paragraph 6 in the box below.

Up in the sunlit canopy thrives a colorful community of fruits and flowers, birds, animals, and insects—some of which never come down to the ground.

What is the purpose of the dash in the sentence?

A. to set off a definition

B. to show fact versus opinion

C. to set off additional information

D. to show an interesting comparison