

**Directions: Read the selection and answer the questions that follow.**

## **Bus Stops**

1 Charles stood at the bus stop tapping his foot impatiently as the city bus lumbered slowly toward him along Allen Drive. The bus was less than a mile away, but it would make several more stops along the winding route before reaching him. He bounced on his toes as he waited, watching his breath turn to fog in the chill of the November air, and thought about how Natalie had refused to give him a ride to the downtown gym.

2 "It's out of my way, Charles," she had stubbornly protested. "And I'm already late." That was probably true. Natalie was always late.

3 So he waited for bus 602 which, like his sister, always seemed to be running late! He couldn't wait until he got his own car. Things would be different then. He had been saving his pay from his part-time job at Robinson's Market. It was hard to fit work into his busy school and practice schedules, but it was important to him.

4 The air brakes of the old bus brought him out of his trance and he hurried aboard, anxious to escape the icy wind. Dropping his money into the fare box, he paused to acclimate himself to the air inside the bus. As the warmth of the bus's interior rushed over him, he felt a brief chill roll across his skin. He relaxed his shoulders and scanned the seats of the mostly empty bus. He chose a seat near the back and headed toward it.

5 "Hey, Charles," someone called as he passed by. Glancing over his shoulder, Charles saw a guy about his age waving to him. "How have you been?" the guy asked, sticking out his hand. He was bundled up in a thick jacket with a scarf wrapped around his neck and a cap pulled low over his forehead, covering his ears. He sat there smiling with his hand suspended across the aisle. Charles hesitated, trying desperately to put a name to the face that seemed vaguely familiar.

6 "It's me, Tony," the guy said, his hand still extended. With his other hand, he pulled off the woolen cap and tugged down the scarf. "Don't you recognize me?"

7 "Oh, hey, Tony," Charles said, at last, slapping his hand across Tony's. "Sorry, man," Charles explained, "but you're covered up like a man at the North Pole." The truth was he barely recognized his old friend.

8 "Well, you know me," Tony admitted, laughing. "I never could stand cold weather." After a brief moment of awkwardness, he added, "It's been a long time."

9 "Yeah," Charles said, not sure how to respond. "I guess it has." He wasn't sure whether to continue the conversation or tell his old friend it was nice to see him again and go to his seat. He looked more closely at Tony, who seemed equally uncomfortable. A few years ago they had been best friends, but they had somehow lost touch in high school. Now they saw each other only sporadically, once or twice each year.

10 "So, where're you headed?" Tony broke the awkward silence, as the bus squealed to a stop in order to pick up new passengers.

11 Charles backed up and sat across the aisle from Tony. "Oh, just over to the City Gym to shoot some hoops," he answered, raising his hands in the air and shooting an imaginary basketball.

12 "That's right!" Tony said, smiling, recalling their playing days together in school. "Your senior season's about to start. How's it feel to be the big star on campus?"

13 Charles shook his head and chuckled. "Yeah, right," he sighed. "I'll be lucky if I keep my starting spot." He wasn't kidding either; the team had several talented sophomores and juniors trying out for starting spots. That's why he was riding a bus halfway across town to practice on a frigid Saturday morning. "What about you?" he asked Tony. "How come you never played in high school?" Tony had been a decent player on their middle school team.

14 Tony chuckled. "Come on, Charles. I was never that good. You were the one. Everyone knew you were going to be a star—high school, then college, then all the way to the pros."

15 "Yeah, I used to think that too," Charles sighed, looking down at the floor. "I guess I'm not that good either," he said frankly. This had been on his mind a lot lately, but he was surprised by his candor now. The truthfulness of the statement felt like an admission. Suddenly, his stomach felt like he had swallowed a roller coaster, and he wished he had stayed home. "Oh, well," he said, looking up, "life goes on."

16 "It sure does," Tony replied quietly.

17 The bus driver momentarily interrupted their conversation as he called out the names of the cross streets where the bus was making its next stop. Charles quickly glanced around to see where he was.

18 "Maybe it's time for me to make a change," Charles said with a forced smile. "So where are you going this early?"

19 "I volunteer at the community center," Tony said. "I tutor kids there."

20 "That's cool. I had a tutor help me in English last year," Charles said. "Are you practicing to be a teacher?"

21 "Maybe," Tony said. "I'm thinking about it." He explained how he had started tutoring the year before as part of a school assignment. "You ought to drop by sometime," he added. "You'd like it. You used to be great at math."

22 "No, not me," Charles said. "I'm not the tutoring type."

23 "Why not?" Tony asked.

24 "I don't know," Charles said. "The season's starting and it gets pretty hectic." He looked out the window as the bus lurched to a stop. "This bus is making a million stops," he complained. "It's taking forever."

25 "Yeah, I guess everybody's going different places," Tony said, standing up. "This stop's mine. Nice seeing you, Charles," he said, sticking out his hand again.

26 "Take care," Charles said, slapping Tony's palm as he headed for the exit. "Hey, Tony," he called suddenly. "Call me later, okay?" Tony turned with a surprised look. "I'd like to talk to you some more about tutoring." Charles flashed a quick smile at Tony and added, "You know, I'm still a whiz at math!"

---

**1 In paragraph 4, the word acclimate means to —**

- A** verify carefully
- B** become adjusted
- C** identify accurately
- D** feel comforted

**2 What does the word sporadically mean in paragraph 9?**

- F** to occur periodically
- G** to do intentionally
- H** to bring about cheerfully
- J** to come upon peacefully

**3 Which is a synonym for the word candor in paragraph 15?**

- A** anger
- B** anxiety
- C** enthusiasm
- D** honesty

**4 The details in paragraph 3 are important because they —**

- F** show the conflict between Charles and Natalie
- G** explain where Charles is taking the city bus
- H** indicate that Charles is thinking about the future
- J** foreshadow the meeting between Charles and Tony

**5 In paragraphs 8 and 9, the author creates a mood of —**

- A** uneasiness
- B** curiosity
- C** hopefulness
- D** confidence

**6 In paragraph 15, Charles realizes that his basketball career —**

- F** has cost him his best friend
- G** will require much sacrifice
- H** may soon be coming to an end
- J** is more important to him than ever

**7 Why is Charles riding the bus on his way downtown?**

- A** His sister needs to use his car to go to work.
- B** He is planning to meet someone on the bus.
- C** His sister cannot give him a ride because she is late.
- D** He wants to stop at the community center on his way.

**8 A theme of this selection is —**

- F** true friends are hard to find
- G** life is usually predictable
- H** the best things in life are free
- J** people change as they grow up

**9 The reader may best conclude that Charles —**

- A** has decided to quit the school basketball team
- B** has not been as successful in basketball as he expected
- C** no longer enjoys playing the game of basketball
- D** is the least experienced basketball player on his team

**10 The central conflict in this selection is between —**

- F** Charles and Tony
- G** Tony and himself
- H** Natalie and Charles
- J** Charles and himself

**11 The setting of this selection is important because it —**

- A** brings the main characters together
- B** creates the basis for the central conflict
- C** provides visual clues to Charles's dilemma
- D** establishes a timeline of the events in the story

**12 In this selection, the bus stops are symbolic of —**

- F** friendship
- G** memories
- H** choices
- J** family

**13 The character of Charles is mainly revealed through his —**

- A** conversation with Natalie
- B** conversation with Tony
- C** memories of the past
- D** thoughts while waiting for the bus

**14 From which point of view is this selection mostly written?**

- F** First person, Tony
- G** Third person limited, Charles
- H** First person, Charles
- J** Third person limited, Tony