

READING COMPREHENSION
(3 POINTS)

Complete multiple-choice questions and open-ended response.

Ronald Reagan Passage

In this famous speech given on January 28, 1986, President Ronald Reagan addresses a nation that has just witnessed the explosion of the space shuttle Challenger. Read the introduction and the speech, and answer the questions that follow.

[Internet Editor's Note: The horizontal gray bars below represent page breaks in the printed document.]

***President Ronald Reagan Honors the Memory of the
Seven Astronauts Killed in the Space Shuttle Challenger Explosion.***

- 1 *Officially, it was "Shuttle Mission 51-L," but every American knew it as "the flight with the teacher" because one of the crew members was a thirty-seven-year-old teacher named Christa McAuliffe. The first civilian to venture into space, McAuliffe had been chosen out of 11,000 volunteers to join six astronauts on the space shuttle Challenger. Promising "the ultimate field trip," NASA¹ heavily promoted the launch, and tens of millions of Americans—many of them schoolchildren—tuned in to witness the historic event live on January 28, 1986. At 11:39 A.M., cheers erupted at Cape Canaveral and at McAuliffe's school back in Concord, New Hampshire, as the Challenger soared skyward into a picture-perfect, cloudless sky. And then suddenly, inconceivably, the shuttle disappeared into a massive fireball as the two booster rockets sailed on, leaving behind a billowy pitchfork of smoke. Shock immediately turned to grief as the realization sank in: The shuttle had exploded, killing everyone on board. President Reagan was scheduled to give the State of the Union address before Congress that evening, but instead focused solely on the seven crew members who lost their lives—the first American astronauts ever to die in flight.*
- * * *
- 2 Ladies and gentlemen, I'd planned to speak to you tonight to report on the state of the Union, but the events of earlier today have led me to change those plans. Today is a day for mourning and remembering. Nancy and I are pained to the core by the tragedy of the shuttle *Challenger*. We know we share this pain with all of the people of our country. This is truly a national loss.
- 3 Nineteen years ago, almost to the day, we lost three astronauts in a terrible accident on the ground. But we've never lost an astronaut in flight. We've never had a tragedy like this. And perhaps we've forgotten the courage it took for the crew of the shuttle. But they, the *Challenger Seven*, were aware of the dangers, overcame them, and did their

jobs brilliantly. We mourn seven heroes: Michael Smith, Dick Scobee, Judith Resnik, Ronald McNair, Ellison Onizuka, Gregory Jarvis, and Christa McAuliffe. We mourn their loss as a nation together.

4 To the families of the seven: We cannot bear, as you do, the full impact of this tragedy. But we feel the loss, and we're thinking about you so very much. Your loved ones were daring and brave, and they had that special grace, that special spirit that says, "Give me a challenge, and I'll meet it with joy." They had a hunger to explore the universe and discover its truths. They wished to serve, and they did. They served all of us. We've grown used to wonders in this century. It's hard to dazzle us, but for twenty-five years the United States space program has been doing just that. We've grown used to the idea of space, and perhaps we forget that we've only just begun. We're still pioneers. They, the members of the *Challenger* crew, were pioneers.

5 And I want to say something to the schoolchildren of America who were watching the live coverage of the shuttle's takeoff. I know it is hard to understand, but sometimes painful things like this happen. It's all part of the process of exploration and discovery. It's all part of taking a chance and expanding man's horizons. The future doesn't belong to the fainthearted; it belongs to the brave. The *Challenger* crew was pulling us into the future, and we'll continue to follow them.

6 I've always had great faith in and respect for our space program, and what happened today does nothing to diminish it. We don't hide our space program. We don't keep secrets and cover things up. We do it all up front and in public. That's the way freedom is, and we wouldn't change it for a minute. We'll continue our quest in space. There will be more shuttle flights and more shuttle crews and, yes, more volunteers, more civilians, more teachers in space. Nothing ends here. Our hopes and our journeys continue. I want to add that I wish I could talk to every man and woman who works for NASA or who worked on this mission and tell them, "Your dedication and professionalism have moved and impressed us for decades, and we know of your anguish. We share it."

7 There's a coincidence today. On this day 390 years ago, the great explorer Sir Francis Drake died aboard ship off the coast of Panama. In his lifetime the great frontiers were the oceans, and an historian later said, "He lived by the sea, died on it, and was buried in it." Well today we can say of the *Challenger* crew, Their dedication was, like Drake's, complete.

8 The crew of the space shuttle *Challenger* honored us by the manner in which they lived their lives. We will never forget them, nor the last time we saw them, this morning, as they prepared for their journey and waved goodbye and "slipped the surly bonds of earth" to "touch the face of God."²

1. According to the introduction, why was "Shuttle Mission 51-L" considered to be historic and different from other space flights?

- A. It included the first private citizen.
- B. It included the first female astronaut.
- C. It was the first time a space shuttle was launched.
- D. It was the first time astronauts planned to walk in space.

2. Based on the introduction, what was the most likely reason that NASA described the shuttle mission as "the ultimate field trip"?

- A. to emphasize the fact that a teacher was part of the shuttle crew
- B. to publicize the fact that the mission included the first space walk
- C. to encourage people to travel to Cape Canaveral to watch the launch
- D. to indicate that the main purpose of the shuttle mission was educational

3. In paragraph 5, how does President Reagan try to console schoolchildren?
- A. by suggesting there will be no future tragedies
 - B. by explaining the tragedy as a risk of exploration
 - C. by promising they will solve the shuttle's problems
 - D. by explaining the reasons for the shuttle's accident
4. In paragraph 5, President Reagan urges his audience to
- A. solve the problems of the past.
 - B. forget about the tragedies of the past.
 - C. focus on the challenges of the future.
 - D. anticipate further problems in the future.
5. In paragraph 7, what is the main reason President Reagan refers to Sir Francis Drake?
- A. to show that past explorers are sometimes forgotten
 - B. to show that a person must die to be considered a hero
 - C. to show that the astronauts are as heroic as past explorers
 - D. to show that the frontiers of human exploration have changed
6. What is the main message of President Reagan's speech?
- A. Americans should question the future of the space program.
 - B. Americans should honor the Challenger crew by sharing their dream.
 - C. Americans should trust that a similar tragedy is unlikely to happen again.
 - D. Americans should solve the problems that caused the Challenger tragedy
7. In the speech, President Reagan uses the pronoun "we" to refer mainly to
- A. the Challenger crew.
 - B. government officials.
 - C. the American people.
 - D. himself and his wife.
8. What does the colon used at the beginning of paragraph 4 indicate?
- A. President Reagan is beginning a list.
 - B. President Reagan is pausing for suspense.
 - C. President Reagan has omitted some words.
 - D. President Reagan is addressing a specific audience.

9. Open Ended Response:

Explain the techniques President Reagan uses in his speech to honor the Challenger astronauts. Support your answer with relevant and specific details and evidence from the speech.