Reading Comprehension – Test 3

Name: Class: Date: Score: / 20

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Read each text carefully and choose the best answer (A, B, C or D) for each question.

Part 1: Blog post

Read the blog post and answer questions 1-7.

Thirty-four and finally in the deep end

For most of my adult life, I had a set of excuses ready whenever friends suggested a day at the lake. I'd forgotten my swimming things. I had a cold coming on. I preferred reading in the shade anyway. The truth, which I admitted to almost no one, was simpler: I couldn't swim. As a child I had moved schools so often that I always seemed to arrive just after the swimming lessons had finished. By the time I was a teenager, the embarrassment had set in like concrete.

What finally changed things was my niece. Last spring, she asked me to come with her to the local pool, and I heard myself making the usual excuses. She looked at me with the honesty only an eight-year-old can manage and said, "You're scared, aren't you?" I was. That evening, I signed up for an adult beginners' course.

The first lesson was humbling. There were six of us, aged between twenty-five and seventy, standing waist-deep in water and trying not to look at each other. Our instructor, Grace, did not rush us. We spent the whole session simply learning to put our faces in the water and breathe out slowly. It sounds trivial, but for me it was the hardest part of the entire course. My body was convinced that water on the face meant danger, and no amount of reasoning could persuade it otherwise.

Progress was slow and uneven. Some weeks I felt I had gone backwards. But Grace had a habit of reminding us that adults learn differently from children: we think too much. "Your arms already know what to do," she would say. "Let them get on with it."

Ten weeks later, I swam my first full length without stopping. Nobody clapped. It was a busy Tuesday evening, and the people in the fast lane had better things to do. But I stood at the shallow end grinning like a fool.

I'm not a strong swimmer yet, and I may never be. But I've stopped making excuses, and that, it turns out, was the real lesson.

1. What is the blog post mainly about?
   A Swimming techniques that work best for adult beginners
   B How the writer finally faced a fear they had hidden for years
   C Why all children should have swimming lessons at school
   D The writer's close relationship with their niece

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2. Why did the writer not learn to swim as a child?
   A Their parents did not think swimming was important.
   B They had been afraid of water since an accident.
   C They kept changing schools and missed the lessons.
   D Their school did not have a swimming pool.

3. The writer says that "the embarrassment had set in like concrete". This means the embarrassment _____
   A had become fixed and very hard to change
   B had suddenly disappeared
   C had made the writer feel physically ill
   D had been noticed by everyone at school

4. What finally made the writer sign up for lessons?
   A A friend invited them to spend a day at the lake.
   B A doctor recommended swimming for their health.
   C They saw an advertisement at the local pool.
   D Their niece's honest remark made them admit the truth.

5. According to the writer, why was the first lesson so difficult?
   A The other learners were much more confident.
   B Grace expected the group to swim a full length.
   C Their body reacted to water on the face as if it were dangerous.
   D The water in the pool was too deep for beginners.

6. When Grace says that adults "think too much", she means that _____
   A overthinking can stop adults from doing what their bodies are able to do
   B adults should study swimming theory before getting into the water
   C adults are more intelligent learners than children
   D adults worry too much about what other people think of them

7. "Nobody clapped... But I stood at the shallow end grinning like a fool." What does this suggest?
   A The writer was disappointed that nobody noticed.
   B The other swimmers were unfriendly to beginners.
   C The writer felt silly for having taken so long.
   D The achievement meant a lot to the writer, even though nobody else noticed.

Part 2: Magazine interview

Read the interview and answer questions 8-14.

Nadia Kowalczyk has spent fifteen years drawing walking maps for national parks and rural councils. We asked her why paper maps still matter.

Most people use their phones to navigate now. Isn't your job disappearing?

People have been predicting that for years! In fact, demand has stayed fairly steady. Phones are brilliant until the battery dies or the signal disappears, and in the mountains that happens more often than people expect. Rescue teams will tell you that a surprising number of call-outs involve walkers who were relying entirely on a screen. A paper map doesn't need charging.

What does making a walking map actually involve?

Far more walking than drawing, which is the best part. I start with existing survey data, but that only tells you so much. A path that looks obvious on a satellite image might be completely overgrown, or a bridge might have been washed away. So I walk every route myself, often two or three times in

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different seasons. I make notes on things like gates, steep sections and places where people often take a wrong turn.

How do you decide what to include?

That's the real skill. The temptation is to put everything in, but a cluttered map is almost as unhelpful as an empty one. I'm constantly asking: what does a tired walker in the rain actually need to know? Usually it's where the path goes, where there's water, and where you can get off the hill quickly if the weather turns. A beautiful viewpoint is nice to mark, but it isn't going to keep anyone safe.

Has the job changed much since you started?

The tools have, enormously. I used to draw with pens on film; now it's all software. But the basic questions haven't changed. If anything, maps matter more now, because many walkers go out with no sense of the bigger picture. A screen shows you the next few hundred metres. A map shows you the whole valley.

Any advice for walkers?

Take a map, and learn to read it before you need it. The middle of a storm is not the time to work out which way is north.

8. According to Nadia, why is there still demand for paper maps?
   A They are much cheaper than smartphones.
   B Phones can stop working in remote areas.
   C Rescue teams require all walkers to carry them.
   D Most walkers do not know how to use navigation apps.

9. Why does Nadia mention rescue teams?
   A To show that relying only on a phone can be risky
   B To explain who usually buys her maps
   C To criticise rescue teams for arriving too slowly
   D To suggest that walkers should always walk in groups

10. Why does Nadia walk each route several times?
    A She enjoys walking more than drawing.
    B Councils pay her according to the number of days she walks.
    C The real condition of a path can differ from the data and change with the seasons.
    D She often takes a wrong turn the first time.

11. What does Nadia mean when she says "a cluttered map is almost as unhelpful as an empty one"?
    A Empty maps are more useful than detailed ones.
    B Maps should only show the most attractive parts of a route.
    C Old maps are often less accurate than new ones.
    D A map with too much information can be as hard to use as one with too little.

12. Which of these would Nadia probably consider LEAST important to include on a walking map?
    A A spot with a lovely view
    B Places where walkers can find water
    C A quick way down if the weather changes
    D The route the path follows

13. When Nadia says "the basic questions haven't changed", she means that _____
    A walkers still ask her the same questions as before
    B deciding what walkers really need is still the heart of the job
    C she still draws with the same pens and film
    D software has not changed the way maps look

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14. What does Nadia's final piece of advice suggest?
    A Walkers should only go out in good weather.
    B A compass is more reliable than a map.
    C Map reading is a skill you should practise before an emergency.
    D Storms are the most common cause of accidents.

Part 3: Book review

Read the book review and answer questions 15-20.

The Salt Orchard by Elena Marsh

Elena Marsh's third novel opens with a funeral and closes with a wedding. In between, it covers forty years in the life of a fruit-growing family on a windy stretch of coast. It is an ambitious book, occasionally a frustrating one, and for long stretches a genuinely moving one.

The story is told mostly through the eyes of Ruth, the eldest daughter. She inherits the family orchard after her father's death, despite having spent most of her twenties trying to escape it. Marsh is excellent on the small, unglamorous details of farming life: the early mornings, the anxiety about late frosts, the arguments over money that are never really about money. Ruth herself is a wonderfully complicated character: stubborn, funny and often unfair to the people who love her most. It is a pleasure to watch her slowly grow into a role she never wanted.

The problems begin when Marsh moves away from Ruth. In the middle section, the story jumps between five or six other family members. Several of them feel less like real people than devices for moving the plot along. Ruth's younger brother, in particular, seems to exist mainly to make bad decisions at convenient moments. Readers who are less patient than I am may be tempted to give up at this point.

They should resist. The final hundred pages, which return firmly to Ruth, are the strongest in the book. Without giving too much away, a long-buried family secret finally comes to light, and Marsh handles it with remarkable restraint. There are no dramatic speeches and no tearful confessions, just two sisters sitting in a kitchen, saying far less than they mean. It is the quietest scene in the novel and by far the most powerful.

The Salt Orchard is not a perfect book. At nearly five hundred pages, it is at least a hundred pages too long, and a stricter editor might have saved it from its weaker passages. But Marsh writes with real warmth and intelligence, and Ruth is a character who stays with you long after the last page. Flaws and all, it is well worth your time.

15. What is the reviewer's overall opinion of the novel?
    A It is a flawless book with no weak parts.
    B It has clear weaknesses but is well worth reading.
    C It is badly written and not worth finishing.
    D It will only interest readers who know about farming.

16. What does the reviewer especially praise in the description of farming life?
    A Its exciting and dramatic events
    B Its realistic attention to everyday details
    C Its scientific explanations of fruit growing
    D Its romantic picture of life in the countryside

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17. The phrase "arguments over money that are never really about money" suggests that _____
    A the arguments hide deeper emotional tensions in the family
    B the family is extremely poor
    C the characters do not understand how to manage money
    D the father left the family no money at all

18. What is the reviewer's main criticism of the middle section?
    A It focuses too much on Ruth.
    B It includes too many dramatic speeches.
    C Some characters seem to exist only to move the story forward.
    D It is set in too many different places.

19. "They should resist." Here the reviewer is advising readers to _____
    A stop reading after the middle section
    B read the final chapters first
    C avoid the book if they are impatient
    D keep reading despite the weaker middle part

20. In paragraph 4, the word "restraint" is closest in meaning to _____
    A obvious excitement **B** strong criticism **C** great speed **D** careful control

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Answer key – Reading Comprehension – Test 3

1 B	2 C	3 A	4 D	5 C	6 A	7 D	8 B	9 A	10 C
11 D	12 A	13 B	14 C	15 B	16 B	17 A	18 C	19 D	20 D

Explanations

1. **B** – The post describes how the writer hid their inability to swim and finally overcame it.
2. **C** – The writer says they moved schools so often that they always arrived after the swimming lessons had finished.
3. **A** – Concrete becomes hard and fixed, so the feeling had become permanent and difficult to overcome.
4. **D** – After the niece said "You're scared, aren't you?", the writer admitted the fear and signed up that evening.
5. **C** – The writer explains that their body was convinced water on the face meant danger.
6. **A** – She adds "Your arms already know what to do. Let them get on with it," so thinking gets in the way.
7. **D** – The writer was smiling widely despite the lack of attention, which shows personal pride.
8. **B** – She says phones are brilliant until the battery dies or the signal disappears, which often happens in the mountains.
9. **A** – She says many call-outs involve walkers who were relying entirely on a screen.
10. **C** – She explains that survey data and satellite images can be misleading, so she checks routes in different seasons.
11. **D** – "Cluttered" means too full; she argues that too much detail makes a map difficult to use.
12. **A** – She says a beautiful viewpoint is nice to mark but will not keep anyone safe.
13. **B** – Only the tools have changed; the key decisions about what to include remain the same.
14. **C** – She says to learn to read a map before you need it, not in the middle of a storm.
15. **B** – The reviewer lists several flaws but concludes "Flaws and all, it is well worth your time."
16. **B** – The reviewer says Marsh is excellent on the "small, unglamorous details" of farming life.
17. **A** – If the arguments are not really about money, they must be about something deeper, such as feelings and relationships.
18. **C** – The reviewer says several characters feel like "devices for moving the plot along" rather than real people.
19. **D** – The reviewer tells readers not to give up, because the final hundred pages are the strongest.
20. **D** – The scene has no dramatic speeches or tearful confessions, so Marsh controls the emotion carefully.

Notes for teachers: Use the test as a timed exam practice task or as a classroom activity, with one section per lesson. Many distractors repeat words from the texts but change the meaning. They target learners who match words instead of understanding ideas, especially in the inference and figurative-language questions. For follow-up, ask students to find the exact sentence that supports each answer. They could also write a short review or blog post in the same style.

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