

# Reading Comprehension Practice Questions

## — Section 3

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The **Reading Comprehension** section contains reading passages and questions about the passages. The questions are about information that is stated or implied in the passage and about some of the specific words in the passages. Because many English words have more than one meaning, it is important to remember that these questions concern the meaning of a word or phrase within the context of the passage.

Before completing these practice questions, you might wish to [print out an answer sheet](#).

### Directions and Practice Questions for Reading Comprehension

Directions and examples of the types of questions you will find in the **Reading Comprehension** section of the *TOEFL*® test follow. Use the [answer key](#) to see the correct answers for the Reading Comprehension questions.

Section 3 measures your ability to read and understand short passages similar in topic and style to those that students are likely to encounter in North American universities and colleges. This section contains reading passages and questions about the passages.

**Directions:** In the Reading Comprehension section you will read several passages. Each one is followed by a number of questions about it. You are to choose the **one** best answer, A, B, C or D, to each question. Then, on your answer sheet, find the number of the question and fill in the space that corresponds to the letter of the answer you have chosen.

Sample Answer

A  B  C  D

Answer all questions about the information in a passage on the basis of what is **stated** or **implied** in that passage.

**Read the following passage:**

The railroad was not the first institution to impose regularity on society, or to draw attention to the importance of precise timekeeping. For as long as merchants have set out their wares at daybreak and communal festivities have been celebrated, people have been in rough agreement with their neighbors as to the time of

*Line* (5)

day. The value of this tradition is today more apparent than ever. Were it not for public acceptance of a single yardstick of time, social life would be unbearably chaotic: the massive daily transfers of goods, services, and information would proceed in fits and starts; the very fabric of modern society would begin to unravel.

### Example I

What is the main idea of the passage?

- A. In modern society we must make more time for our neighbors.
- B. The traditions of society are timeless.
- C. An accepted way of measuring time is essential for the smooth functioning of society.
- D. Society judges people by the times at which they conduct certain activities.

The main idea of the passage is that societies need to agree about how time is measured in order to function smoothly. Therefore, you should choose answer C.

### Example II

In line 6, the phrase "this tradition" refers to

- A. the practice of starting the business day at dawn
- B. friendly relations between neighbors
- C. the railroad's reliance on time schedules
- D. people's agreement on the measurement of time

The phrase "this tradition" refers to the preceding clause, "people have been in rough agreement with their neighbors as to the time of day." Therefore, you should choose answer D.

**Now begin work on the questions.**

### PRACTICE PASSAGE

The Alaska pipeline starts at the frozen edge of the Arctic Ocean. It stretches southward across the largest and northernmost state in the United States, ending at a remote ice-free seaport village nearly

*Line* 800 miles from where it begins. It is massive in size and extremely  
(5) complicated to operate.

The steel pipe crosses windswept plains and endless miles of delicate tundra that tops the frozen ground. It weaves through crooked canyons, climbs sheer mountains, plunges over rocky crags, makes its way through thick forests, and passes over or  
(10) under hundreds of rivers and streams. The pipe is 4 feet in diameter, and up to 2 million barrels (or 84 million gallons) of crude oil can be pumped through it daily.

Resting on H-shaped steel racks called "bents," long sections of the pipeline follow a zigzag course high above the frozen earth.  
(15) Other long sections drop out of sight beneath spongy or rocky ground and return to the surface later on. The pattern of the pipeline's up-and-down route is determined by the often harsh demands of the arctic and subarctic climate, the tortuous lay of the land, and the varied compositions of soil, rock, or permafrost  
(20) (permanently frozen ground). A little more than half of the pipeline is elevated above the ground. The remainder is buried anywhere from 3 to 12 feet, depending largely upon the type of terrain and the properties of the soil.

One of the largest in the world, the pipeline cost approximately  
(25) \$8 billion and is by far the biggest and most expensive construction project ever undertaken by private industry. In fact, no single business could raise that much money, so 8 major oil companies formed a consortium in order to share the costs. Each company controlled oil rights to particular shares of land in the oil fields and  
(30) paid into the pipeline-construction fund according to the size of its holdings. Today, despite enormous problems of climate, supply shortages, equipment breakdowns, labor disagreements, treacherous terrain, a certain amount of mismanagement, and even theft, the

Alaska pipeline has been completed and is operating.

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## **PRACTICE QUESTIONS**

1. The passage primarily discusses the pipeline's
  1. operating costs
  2. employees
  3. consumers
  4. construction
2. The word "it" in line 4 refers to
  1. pipeline
  2. ocean
  3. state
  4. village
3. According to the passage, 84 million gallons of oil can travel through the pipeline each
  1. day
  2. week
  3. month
  4. year
4. The phrase "Resting on" in line 13 is closest in meaning to
  1. Consisting of
  2. Supported by
  3. Passing under
  4. Protected with
5. The author mentions all of the following as important in determining the pipeline's route EXCEPT the
  1. climate
  2. lay of the land itself
  3. local vegetation

4. kind of soil and rock
6. The word "undertaken" in line 26 is closest in meaning to
  1. removed
  2. selected
  3. transported
  4. attempted
7. How many companies shared the costs of constructing the pipeline?
  1. 3
  2. 4
  3. 8
  4. 12
8. The word "particular" in line 29 is closest in meaning to
  1. peculiar
  2. specific
  3. exceptional
  4. equal
9. Which of the following determined what percentage of the construction costs each member of the consortium would pay?
  1. How much oil field land each company owned
  2. How long each company had owned land in the oil fields
  3. How many people worked for each company
  4. How many oil wells were located on the company's land
10. Where in the passage does the author provide a term for an earth covering that always remains frozen?
  1. Line 3
  2. Line 13
  3. Line 19
  4. Line 32