

READING TEST

35 Minutes—40 Questions

DIRECTIONS: There are several passages in this test. Each passage is accompanied by several questions. After reading a passage, choose the best answer to each question and fill in the corresponding oval on your answer document. You may refer to the passages as often as necessary.

Passage I

LITERARY NARRATIVE: This passage is adapted from the short story “From Aboard the Night Train” by Kimberly M. Blaeser (©1993 by Kimberly M. Blaeser), which appeared in *Earth Song, Sky Spirit: Short Stories of the Contemporary Native American Experience*.

The passage begins with a female narrator traveling to her hometown.

The moon gives some light and I can make out the contours of the land, see the faint reflection in the lakes and ponds we pass. Several times I see or imagine I see glowing eyes staring back at me from a patch of woods beside the track. When we pass through the tiny towns, I try to read their signs, catch their names from their water towers or grain elevators. Occasionally the train stops at . . . Portage . . . Winona . . . Red Wing.

In my sleeping compartment, watching the night countryside, so much world rolls by my window. Like a voyeur I watch the various reunion scenes. I feel these scenes add up to something, some meaning or lesson about all life, and I try to put it into words for myself but find I can’t. I finally give up, roll over, go to sleep, and dream.

But now I am awake, keeping my vigil over the Midwest’s pastoral kingdom. Chicago, even Minneapolis seems a long way away. A few hours later, still in the deep night hours, the train arrives at my stop, Detroit Lakes, Minnesota, the closest I can get to my destination.

Suddenly, as I descend the two steps from the train, the porter hands me into one of the reunion scenes. “Hi, honey, how was the trip? Did you get any sleep?” “A little. Been waiting long?” “Long enough to beat your dad in two games of cribbage . . .” Glancing back at the train windows, I imagine I am looking into eyes hidden behind mirrored sunglasses.

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I think about progress a lot in the next few days and about what passes for progress. Nightly we walk about town, talk marriages and funerals, then sit on the newly installed benches on Main Street. Together we assemble from our memories the town as it was twenty or twenty-five years ago. We remember the little Model

Meat Market and the old Pioneer office. We rebuild the Landmark Hotel, take down the vinyl fronts from the grocery store, change the light posts, the awnings, the names of the current businesses. I put back the old depot, you the corner funeral home. But soon we are distracted and leave things half constructed when we begin to add the people, what’s-his-name, the square dance caller; Ed, the fire chief; and Lydia, the town’s best gossip. On the walk back home, we have begun to list very specific things, which is the closest we get to the intangibles: the rental meat lockers, the four-digit telephone numbers, the free ice cream during dairy month.

Late at night in my old bed, I listen to the night sounds of the house and fall asleep counting the changes that have come to my little hometown: The park is off limits after dark now, the football field is fenced in, one-hour photo has come to town along with a tanning salon and a pizza parlor. The dry goods store is gone, the dairy, long gone. People lock their houses now more than once a year when the carnival comes to town. But all of these changes pale in comparison to what has replaced the bait shop, the used car lot, and Mr. Morton’s small farm, what has sprung up on Highway 59 at the edge of town: Las Vegas-style gambling.

* * *

Taking the train back, I decide to put on pajamas and crawl under the sheets, hoping to trick myself into a good night’s sleep. It seems to work. I have slept soundly for several hours, but then the dreams start. I fall in and out of them. But they are not the usual nightmares. I am in a place where folks know you ten, fifteen, twenty years after you’ve left and still see in your face that of your grandfather or aunt or cousin. I know I am home and I feel safe.

I have an early breakfast with a would-be journalist and some ski vacationers who want to talk about election prospects. I merely feign attention. I nod or laugh on cue, while I try to read upside-down a story in the would-be journalist’s newspaper that has caught my eye. It is about the Russian space station and the cosmonaut who had been up in orbit during the takeover attempt and ultimate dissolution of the Soviet Union. After sixteen long months, they are bringing the capsule back. While the train carries me back to my current home and away from my former, I keep thinking about

that poor cosmonaut coming back to find his whole world changed, to find himself a man without a country—at least without the country he left behind.

85 I watch the ten o'clock national news broadcast. I see him emerge from the capsule. I see him try to stand and have his knees buckle. I know they said it was because he hadn't been able to exercise for such a long time, but I wonder if his weak-kneed feeling might not
90 have more to do with what he saw out the window of the space station and with how the world was happening around without him.

1. The point of view from which the passage is told is best described as that of:
 - A. a young adult riding a train through the small towns of the Upper Midwest.
 - B. a young adult preparing to move away from her hometown.
 - C. an adult missing the new home she has established.
 - D. an adult reflecting on the past and pondering the present.
2. The passage contains recurring references to all of the following EXCEPT:
 - F. dreams.
 - G. reunion scenes.
 - H. photographs.
 - J. train trips.
3. The first three paragraphs (lines 1–21) establish all of the following about the narrator EXCEPT that she is:
 - A. passing through a number of towns.
 - B. originally from Chicago.
 - C. traveling by train.
 - D. observant of the landscape.
4. It can reasonably be inferred from the passage that the narrator thinks her hometown has:
 - F. improved significantly over the years.
 - G. made little genuine progress.
 - H. remained about the same as it was years ago.
 - J. a chance of being rebuilt as it used to be.
5. Based on the narrator's account, all of the following were part of the past, rather than the present, in her hometown EXCEPT:
 - A. four-digit phone numbers.
 - B. the fenced-in football field.
 - C. free ice cream during dairy month.
 - D. the depot.
6. According to the narrator, which of the following businesses is relatively new to her hometown?
 - F. The tanning salon
 - G. The bait shop
 - H. The dry goods store
 - J. The used-car lot
7. When the narrator refers to the cosmonaut as "a man without a country" (lines 83–84), she is most likely directly referring to the:
 - A. cosmonaut's feeling that he is now a citizen of space, not the former Soviet Union.
 - B. cosmonaut's unrealized expectation that he will be treated like a hero.
 - C. political transformation that occurred while the cosmonaut was in space.
 - D. sixteen months that the cosmonaut spent in orbit around Earth.
8. Details in the passage most strongly suggest that the people meeting the narrator at the train station include:
 - F. her father.
 - G. her sister.
 - H. a neighbor.
 - J. a journalist.
9. The narrator indicates that the most significant change to her hometown has been the addition of:
 - A. square dancing.
 - B. vinyl storefronts.
 - C. benches on Main Street.
 - D. Las Vegas-style gambling.
10. According to the passage, news reports attributed the cosmonaut's knees buckling to:
 - F. his gratitude at being back on Earth.
 - G. political changes in the world.
 - H. a lack of exercise.
 - J. his dismay at what he had seen from the space station.