



HiSET™ Language Arts – Reading Practice Test



Directions

This is a test of some of the skills involved in understanding what you read. The passages in this test come from a variety of published works, both literary and informational. Each passage is followed by a number of questions.

The passages begin with an introduction presenting information that may be helpful as you read the selection. After you have read a passage, go on to the questions that follow. For each question, choose the best answer, and mark your choice on the answer sheet. You may refer to a passage as often as necessary.

Work as quickly as you can without becoming careless. Don't spend too much time on any question that is difficult for you to answer. Instead, skip it and return to it later if you have time. Try to answer every question even if you have to guess.

Mark all your answers on the answer sheet. Give only one answer to each question and make every mark heavy and dark, as in this example.

Correct



Incorrect



If you decide to change one of your answers, be sure to erase the first mark completely.

Be sure that the number of the question you are answering matches the number of the row of answer choices you are marking on your answer sheet.

Language Arts – Reading

Time—25 minutes

19 Questions

A violent storm has threatened the first voyage of the ship *Nan-Shan*. This excerpt from a work of fiction portrays several crew members, including the first mate, Jukes, as they confront the storm.

Jukes was as ready a man as any half-dozen young mates that may be caught by casting a net upon the waters; and though he had been somewhat taken aback by the startling viciousness of the first squall, he had pulled himself together on the instant, had called out the hands, and had rushed them along to secure such
5 openings about the deck as had not been already battened down earlier in the evening. Shouting in his fresh, stentorian¹ voice, “Jump, boys, and bear a hand!” he led in the work, telling himself the while that he had “just expected this.”

But at the same time he was growing aware that this was rather more than he had expected. From the first stir of the air felt on his cheek the gale seemed to take upon
10 itself the accumulated impetus of an avalanche. Heavy sprays enveloped the *Nan-Shan* from stem to stern, and instantly in the midst of her regular rolling she began to jerk and plunge as though she had gone mad with fright.

Jukes thought, “This is no joke.” While he was exchanging explanatory yells with his captain, a sudden lowering of the darkness came upon the night, falling
15 before their vision like something palpable.² It was as if the masked lights of the world had been turned down. Jukes was uncritically glad to have his captain at hand. It relieved him as though that man had, by simply coming on deck, taken most of the gale’s weight upon his shoulders. Such is the prestige, the privilege, and the burden of command.

20 Captain MacWhirr could expect no relief of that sort from anyone on earth. Such is the loneliness of command. He was trying to see, with that watchful manner of a seaman who stares into the wind’s eye as if into the eye of an adversary, to penetrate the hidden intention and guess the aim and force of the thrust. The strong wind swept at him out of a vast obscurity; he felt under his feet the uneasiness of
25 his ship, and he could not even discern the shadow of her shape. He wished it were not so; and very still he waited. . . .

Excerpt from *Typhoon* by Joseph Conrad.

¹**stentorian:** loud and far-reaching

²**palpable:** able to be felt

1. In lines 1-2, the description of Jukes as “as ready a man as any half-dozen young mates that may be caught by casting a net upon the waters” means that he
 - A is better at fishing than other men on his ship.
 - B is a good catch because he has had many years of experience.
 - C is as generally capable as other first mates.
 - D does the work of six men.

2. What was Jukes doing while the crew rushed about the deck?
 - A He was watching them.
 - B He was working alongside them.
 - C He was searching for the captain.
 - D He was urging the men to jump overboard.

3. Jukes most likely told himself that he had “just expected this” (line 7) in order to
 - A reassure himself.
 - B reassure the crew.
 - C appear experienced to the captain.
 - D hide his fear from the crew.

4. How did Jukes feel when Captain MacWhirr came on deck?
 - A Angry
 - B Fearful
 - C Surprised
 - D Comforted

5. In the third and fourth paragraphs (lines 13-26), the author has used the storm as an opportunity to do which of the following?
 - A Suggest that there is conflict developing between Jukes and the captain
 - B Portray weaknesses in Jukes’s character
 - C Contrast the captain’s position of responsibility with Jukes’s position
 - D Describe the various measures that must be taken while sailing a ship during severe weather

Recent animal behavior studies have found that most species appear to spend a great deal of time resting. Monkeys, for example, spend three-quarters of their waking hours just sitting, while hummingbirds perch motionless about 80 percent of every day.

5 Giving the lie to the old fables about the unflagging industriousness of ants, bees, beavers, and the like, a new specialty known as time budget analysis reveals that the great majority of creatures spend most of their time doing nothing much at all. They eat when they must or can. Some species build a makeshift shelter now and again; others fulfill the occasional social obligation, like picking out fleas from a fellow creature's fur.

10 A fair analysis of animal inactivity shows it is almost never born of aimless indolence, but instead serves a broad variety of purposes. Some animals lounge around to conserve precious calories, others to improve digestion of the calories they have consumed. Some do it to stay cool, others to keep warm. The hunted is best camouflaged when it's not fidgeting or fussing, and so too is the hunter, who wishes to remain concealed until the optimal moment for attack. Some creatures linger quietly in their territory to guard it, and others stay home to avoid being cannibalized by their neighbors.

15 Even the busy bees or worker ants dedicate only about 20 percent of the day to doing chores like gathering nectar or tidying up the nest. Otherwise, the insects stay still. The myth of the tireless social insect probably arose from observations of entire hives or anthills, which are little galaxies of ceaseless activity. But now that scientists have learned to tag individual insects to see what each does from one moment to the next, they find that any single bee or ant has a lot of surplus time.

20 Biologists studying animals at rest turn to sophisticated mathematical models, resembling those used by economists, which take into account an animal's energy demands, fertility rate, the relative abundance and location of food and water, weather conditions, and other factors. They do extensive cost-benefit analyses, asking questions like: How high is the cost of foraging compared with the potential calories that may be gained? Such a calculation involves not only a measure of how much energy an animal burns as it rummages about relative to what it would spend resting, but also a consideration of, for example, how hot it will become in motion, and thus how much of its stored water will be needed to evaporate away heat to cool the body. Once they complete their computations, the biologists usually
25 acknowledge their respect for the animal's decision to lie low.

Humans generally spend more time working than do other creatures. One reason for human diligence is that we can often override our impulses to slow down. Many humans are driven to work hard by a singular desire to gather resources far beyond what is required for survival. Squirrels collect what they need to make it through one winter; only humans worry about college bills or retirement.

Excerpt from "Busy as a Bee?" from *The Beauty of the Beastly*. Copyright © 1995 by Natalie Angier. Reprinted by permission of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved.

6. The passage suggests that the primary reason for animal inactivity is

- A greed.
- B illness.
- C boredom.
- D self-preservation.

7. What does "indolence" (line 6) mean?

- A Dissatisfaction
- B Exhaustion
- C Instinct
- D Laziness

8. **What innovation allowed biologists to discover that certain species of insects were less active than had previously been supposed?**
- A Recently developed mathematical formulas
 - B Computer programs that generate cost-benefit analyses
 - C The ability to mark and keep track of individual members of the species
 - D The reconstruction of natural habitats in laboratory conditions
9. **According to the passage, what is one way biologists use models like those used by economists?**
- A To measure and compare the caloric expenditures of various activities
 - B To study the division of labor in various animal colonies
 - C To predict animal behavior based on weather patterns
 - D To monitor the feeding habits of animals
10. **What is the most likely reason that “biologists usually acknowledge their respect for the animal’s decision to lie low” (lines 24-25)?**
- A Their fieldwork made them experience firsthand the dangers animals cope with in the wild.
 - B Their studies show that rest periods are necessary for safety and for conservation of the animal’s energy.
 - C They think animals who work in short, efficient bursts and then take long rests provide a sensible model for humans.
 - D They observe that species that rest more seem to have lower stress levels.
11. **Which of the following meanings associated with the word “singular” seems most intended in line 28?**
- A Unique
 - B Private
 - C Superior
 - D Admirable
12. **Which of the following explanations does the passage suggest for humans’ tendency to spend relatively more time working?**
- A Humans work hard for the survival of their communities as well as for their own individual survival.
 - B Humans work to address not just their current needs but also their future needs and their wants.
 - C Human survival instincts are less strong than those of other species.
 - D Many humans find the work they do to be a source of gratification in itself.
13. **Which of the following states the primary purpose of the passage?**
- A To demonstrate the unreasonableness of human attitudes toward work and rest
 - B To analyze the specific work and rest behaviors of humans and insects
 - C To compare activity levels in various species with those of humans
 - D To explain how and why views of animal inactivity have recently been revised

**A soccer field is the setting in the untitled poem below,
which was written by Ellen Bryant Voigt.**

Muscular and fleet, he moves without thinking
among the shifting jerseys on the field.
In his wake the paler one,
through wave after wave of the enemy line,
5 presses the white ball forward: winded and earnest,
he has willed his body to this pitch
until the body is inside his mind
as the mind arranges pieces on the board—now
he cuts a wide angle and passes the ball
10 though he knows his friend will never give it back.
Ahead of him, always ahead of him:
this is the pattern
already set in their early victories,
one at the prow, one at the wheel.

Poem from *Two Trees* by Ellen Bryant Voigt. Copyright © 1992 by Ellen Bryant Voigt. Reprinted by permission of W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

- 14. In line 1, the word “fleet” most nearly means**
- A tall.
 - B swift.
 - C strong.
 - D awkward.
- 15. In line 3, the phrase “In his wake” means that “the paler one” is**
- A by his side.
 - B calling to him.
 - C close behind him.
 - D making a final effort.
- 16. What is being described in lines 3–5?**
- A A soccer team trying to beat a much better team
 - B A soccer player maneuvering the ball past opponents
 - C Two friends competing in drills during soccer practice
 - D A soccer player imagining what an opponent will do
- 17. The player described in lines 5–7 is apparently**
- A pushing himself to the limit.
 - B playing carelessly, without thinking.
 - C slowing down the action to figure out what to do.
 - D too tired to be able to keep the ball under control.
- 18. Based on details in the poem, which of the following can be concluded about the soccer players?**
- A They are engaged in an unfriendly rivalry.
 - B They are accustomed to playing together.
 - C They are trying to work out a new formation.
 - D They are not very involved in the game.
- 19. One of the poem’s main themes is**
- A the lack of team spirit exhibited by some players.
 - B the idea that competitive sports turn friends into enemies.
 - C the envy some players feel for the high-scoring players.
 - D the unselfishness required to be a good team player.



Reading Practice Test
Answer Key

| Question Number | Correct Answer |
|-----------------|----------------|
| 1 | C |
| 2 | B |
| 3 | A |
| 4 | D |
| 5 | C |
| 6 | D |
| 7 | D |
| 8 | C |
| 9 | A |
| 10 | B |
| 11 | A |
| 12 | B |
| 13 | D |
| 14 | B |
| 15 | C |
| 16 | B |
| 17 | A |
| 18 | B |
| 19 | D |

Are You Ready to Take the HiSET Language Arts – Reading Test?

You can estimate how well prepared you are for the real test in the following way. First, count how many questions you answered correctly on this practice test. Do not include any questions that you did not answer or that you answered incorrectly. Then find the number of questions you answered correctly in the table below to see an estimate of how well prepared you are.

| Number of questions you answered correctly | How prepared you are |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 0 to 8 | Not yet prepared |
| 9 to 11 | Somewhat prepared |
| 12 to 14 | Adequately prepared |
| 15 to 19 | Well prepared |