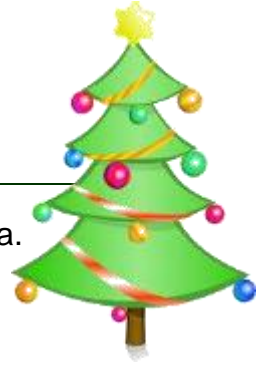


“A Christmas in March”

Reading Comprehension – Short Stories

Directions: Read the story. Then answer the questions below.



Just before Christmas in 1944, a letter arrived at our house in Philadelphia. The postmark was from Tuskegee, Alabama, so we all knew who it was from. We excitedly gathered around Mother as she opened it at the kitchen table.

My Dear Mother,

I did not get the leave I expected for Christmas. I will miss all of you. Please leave the Christmas tree up until I make it back. I hope to be home by March.

Love from your son,

Clifton

I was 17-years-old at the time. My heart sank. I felt a profound sadness about my favorite brother not being home for Christmas. He was one of the Tuskegee Airmen and was responsible for maintaining the airplanes flying off to fight in World War II.

My mother, being the **optimist** she always was, said, “Well, it looks like we’ll get to have two Christmases this year!”

After Christmas, my sister and I worked together to make sure we kept that Christmas tree looking as pretty as possible. This was no easy feat.

By mid January, the branches drooped so low to the ground that they became a sliding board for the decorations. Each day, there were brand new sprinklings of pine needles all over the wooden floor. My sister and I took turns sweeping them up. We repositioned the ornaments to the stronger branches on the tree, hoping they would stay on.

Each time we freshened that tree up, my sister and I were full of thoughts about Clifton and how happy we would be to see him again. It made us feel that he was close by, even though he was hundreds of miles away.

On March 5, the doorbell rang. We ran to the door and gave Clifton a big hug. As he hugged my Mother, I could see him peak over her head at the Christmas tree.

“It’s beautiful,” he said. “Thank you.” Clifton opened his presents and told us all sorts of stories about his work in Tuskegee.

That night as we slept, we heard a crash in the living room. We all ran to see what had happened. The tree had toppled onto the sofa and there were needles and broken ornaments everywhere. We all had a good laugh. It was **fortuitous** Clifton got home when he did!

Questions:

1) How did the narrator's mood shift after Clifton's letter was read to the family?

- A. from grand to humble
- B. from jubilation to anger
- C. from uncertainty to clarity
- D. from excitement to disappointment

2) The mother is an **optimist**. This means she...

- A. is not easily upset.
- B. upholds high standards.
- C. maintains a positive viewpoint.
- D. considers all outcomes before making a decision.

3) What can we conclude from the letter?

▼ Check all that are correct.

- A. Clifton misses his family.
- B. Clifton will be home by March.
- C. Clifton will not be home for Christmas.
- D. Clifton is one of the Tuskegee Airmen.

4) Which word best describes the work the sisters did to help keep the tree looking pretty?

- A. It was a miracle.
- B. It was a debacle.
- C. It was a discovery.
- D. It was a collaboration.

5) What is the most likely reason the narrator compared the tree limbs to a *sliding board*?

- A. The limbs were so high in the air.
- B. The ornaments were slipping off.
- C. The sisters liked to play on them.
- D. The branches felt slippery with no needles on them.

Questions (continued):

- 6) *"Each day, there were brand new sprinklings of pine needles all over the wooden floor."*

"My sister and I took turns sweeping them up."

▼ What is the best way to combine the above sentences?

- A. Each day, there were brand new sprinklings of pine needles all over the wooden floor, therefore, my sister and I took turns sweeping them up.
- B. Each day, there were brand new sprinklings of pine needles all over the wooden floor, and so my sister and I took turns sweeping them up.
- C. Each day, there were brand new sprinklings of pine needles all over the wooden floor because my sister and I took turns sweeping them up.
- D. Each day, there were brand new sprinklings of pine needles all over the wooden floor until my sister and I took turns sweeping them up.

- 7) What did caring for the tree come to represent for the sisters?

- A. a continual hardship
- B. a way of being close to their brother
- C. a hope that the war would end soon
- D. an indication that they did not know when Clifton would return

- 8) What other title would fit this passage best?

- A. "Flying Home"
- B. "A Christmas War"
- C. "Granting Clifton's Wish"
- D. "The Disappointing Letter"

- 9) How does Clifton seem to feel when he sees the Christmas tree?

- A. appreciative
- B. disappointed
- C. estranged
- D. remorseful

- 10) Which describe **fortuitous** circumstances?

▼ Check all that make sense.

- A. getting the last seat on the bus
 - B. having an umbrella when it begins to rain
 - C. reporting a robbery after you see it happen
 - D. doing well in a test you have studied hard for
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