

“Bail”

Reading Comprehension – Short Stories

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

The phone rang at Pratt Taylor’s house at nearly three in the morning.

Pratt fumbled for the phone in the dark. He answered groggily after the fourth ring.

“Hello,” Pratt mumbled into the receiver.

“Mr. Taylor. Thank goodness. I need your help.”

Pratt knew the voice, for sure. However, in his **somnolent** state, he could not quite place it.

“Mr. Taylor!” the man said again in a raspy, loud whisper. “I am in jail. I was allowed one phone call. I’m calling you.”

Then, the fog cleared. Although nearly ten years had passed since their last encounter, Pratt was able to discern something familiar in this voice. It belonged to a boy named Martin Hall, easily one of the most brilliant math students he had ever had. But while Pratt recalled that Martin possessed an enviable **acumen** for math, he also had a knack for getting into trouble.

Still, they had forged a strong student-teacher bond, and when Martin graduated from Linebrook High School, Pratt had told him, “Call me if there is anything you ever need.”

So here it was – the call in the middle of the night.

“Yes, Martin. Is that you?”

“Yes, Mr. Taylor. Can you help?”

“What do you need?”

“Bail money.”

“What did you do?”

“We’ll talk about that later. Can you get me one thousand bucks?”

Pratt knew he could, but he was **hesitant**. What had Martin done? What was Pratt getting himself into? Pratt’s honor to his word helped make his decision.

“Yes, I can. Where shall I bring it?”



"I'm at Jessup in Maryland. My brother will come by your place in the morning. Give the money to him, and he will come and bail me out."

"Ok."

The decision would be one that would **irk** Pratt for a very, very long time.

Questions:

1) "Pratt fumbled for the phone in the dark. He answered groggily after the fourth ring."

- A. Pratt fumbled for the phone in the dark, he answered groggily after the fourth ring.
- B. Pratt fumbled for the phone in the dark, and answered groggily on the fourth ring.
- C. While Pratt fumbled for the phone in the dark, he answered groggily after the fourth ring.
- D. Pratt answered the phone groggily after the fourth ring, fumbling for the phone in the dark.

2) If someone is feeling **somnolent**, which best describes how he or she might act?

- A. irritated
- B. lethargic
- C. maniacal
- D. nimble

3) What does the author mean by the following sentence: "*Then, the fog cleared.*"?

- A. the weather had finally improved
- B. a light had been turned on in the room
- C. something bad had happened to Martin
- D. Pratt had gained a new understanding

4) Which is the best antonym for **acumen**?

- A. distaste
- B. enlightenment
- C. inability
- D. uncertainty

5) Which is the best antonym for **hesitant**?

- A. comfortable
- B. decisive
- C. relaxed
- D. trusting

Questions (continued):

- 6) Which best explains why Pratt decided to get the money for Martin?
- A. Pratt had the money to give.
 - B. Pratt believed Martin was innocent.
 - C. Pratt had promised help many years ago.
 - D. Pratt feared Martin would hurt him if he did not comply.

- 7) Which best describes the Martin who Pratt remembers?
- A. the smartest student he had ever had
 - B. a straight A student with no work ethic
 - C. a gifted student with a propensity for trouble
 - D. a kid from a bad neighborhood trying to get out

- 8) How does Pratt's mood change from the beginning to end of passage?
- A. from sleepy, to forgetful, to giving
 - B. from uncertain, to committed, to angry
 - C. from groggy, to clearheaded, to regretful
 - D. from proud, to reminiscent to ambivalent

- 9) What does the last line of this passage seem to suggest?
- A. that someone gets hurt
 - B. that something bad happens
 - C. that Martin's brother never shows up
 - D. that Martin spent a very long time in jail

- 10) Which is the best antonym for **irk**?
- A. excite
 - B. heal
 - C. humble
 - D. please

If you were Mr. Taylor, would you have bailed Pratt out? Why or why not?
