

“Blizzard in Birmingham”

Reading Comprehension – Short Stories

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



The Turner kids were not **accustomed** to snow. The most they ever got in their southern city of Birmingham was an inch or so each winter, and even that was quite **infrequent**.

What was funny was that even the slightest bit of snow was enough to cancel school and close businesses. No one knew how to drive in the stuff. It was never enough for young Lily Mae Turner, though, because the snow that came was always too sparse to build a snowman or to go sledding.

But one night, in March of 1993, something magical happened.

An unexpected blast of cold air from Canada and moist air from the Caribbean converged on the eastern part of the United States to create the “Storm of the Century.”

All the Turner kids knew was that when they woke up Saturday morning, there was 17 inches of unbelievable snow on their front lawn and as far as the eye could see.

The Turner parents were in shock. Most folks in town were ill-prepared for such a storm. They had no shovels to dig their way out and no salt to keep from slipping. They had no idea what to do.

While the adults seemed paralyzed with disbelief, the Turner kids set about having the time of their lives. Lily Mae discovered that a rope tied to a metal trashcan lid made a perfect sled. John Henry figured out that if he put his feet in plastic grocery bags before putting on his rain boots, his feet stayed warm for a longer time. Rachel made snow angels in every part of the yard. Together, all the kids made a huge snowman and dressed it in dad’s hat and jacket. (Mr. Turner didn’t own a scarf!)

For three straight days, the Turner kids had a **splendid** time. On Tuesday, the temperature hit 70 degrees, and life for these southerners went back to normal.

Questions:

1) What does **accustomed** mean?

- A. used to
- B. aware of
- C. scared of
- D. interested in

2) Which is the best antonym for **infrequent** ?

- A. common
- B. long
- C. rare
- D. surprising

3) Which other title would fit this passage best?

- A. "1993"
- B. "A Cold March"
- C. "Magical Snow"
- D. "No Scarf for a Snowman"

4) Why might the author have described the storm as magical?

- A. because Lily Mae believed the snow was magic
- B. because it was such an unusual thing to happen, it felt like magic
- C. because there was no other explanation for why the storm occurred
- D. because the author wanted to cast doubt on whether the storm actually took place

5) How are the children different than the adults in this passage?

- A. The kids stayed warm, while the adults were very cold.
- B. The kids knew the storm was coming, while the adults did not.
- C. The adults still had to go to work, while the kids stayed home.
- D. The kids went out and had fun, while the adults did not know what to do.

6) What conclusions can be drawn about what the weather is usually like in Birmingham during March?

▼ Check all that make sense.

- A. It is warm.
- B. It is sunny.
- C. It is windy.
- D. It does not snow.

Questions (continued):

7) What can be said about the Turner kids' ideas for playing in the snow without the usual snow gear?

▼ Check all that make sense.

- A. They were creative.
- B. They were complicated.
- C. They were effective.
- D. They were misguided.

8) *"What was funny was that even the slightest bit of snow was enough to cancel school and close businesses."*

"No one knew how to drive in the stuff."

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

- A. What was funny was that even the slightest bit of snow was enough to cancel school and close businesses, no one knew how to drive in the stuff.
- B. What was funny was that even the slightest bit of snow was enough to cancel school and close businesses; no one knew how to drive in the stuff.
- C. What was funny was that even the slightest bit of snow was enough to cancel school and close businesses: no one knew how to drive in the stuff.
- D. What was funny was that even the slightest bit of snow was enough to cancel school and close businesses - no one knew how to drive in the stuff.

9) What was going on outside of Birmingham during this passage?

- A. The reader does not find out.
- B. There was no snow anywhere else.
- C. A storm of historic proportions took place.
- D. The entire country was dealing with snow.

10) What is the best antonym for **splendid** ?

- A. great
 - B. perfect
 - C. happy
 - D. terrible
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