

“Seeing Clearly”

Reading Comprehension – Short Stories

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



The announcement that Donna had reached middle age came **stealthily** and without warning.

Donna, at 42-years-old, was in perfect health. She was fit, trim and ate only the healthiest of foods, **eschewing** soda and candy. She was still asked for her identification when buying wine at the grocery store. She ran several miles every day, and in local road races, she was known for beating people half her age.

“*Forty is the new twenty!*” her friends would say of Donna’s seeming agelessness.

Donna heard the quip so often that a part of her believed that this aging thing was surely for other people.

That all changed during what should have been a fairly **innocuous** event: a trip to the Department of Motor Vehicles to renew her driver’s license.

“Name?” the clerk asked without looking up. Donna replied.

“Address?” Donna gave it.

“Look through there, please,” the clerk gestured toward an eye testing machine perched at the edge of the desk. “Read the first four lines,” she sighed.

Donna pushed her head against the contraption.

“Go ahead.”

Donna was perplexed. Everything was fuzzy. “I think the glass is dirty,” Donna said, searching the desk for a tissue to wipe off the lens.

“It’s not dirty,” the clerk said, her voice dripping with **condescension**.

“There must be some problem,” Donna said, pressing her head against the machine once more.

“Ma’am, do you wear glasses?”

“No, no, I don’t,” Donna responded, a little embarrassed now, as other people in the room began turning to see what was going on.

The clerk glanced down at Donna’s old license and back up at her. “Welcome to middle age, sweetheart. Come back when you’ve had an eye exam and gotten glasses.”

Questions:

- 1) What proverb fits this story best?
- A. Time marches on.
 - B. Time heals all wounds.
 - C. A stitch in time saves nine.
 - D. There is no time like the present.
- 2) Which is the best antonym for **stealthily**?
- A. honestly
 - B. obviously
 - C. slowly
 - D. sneakily
- 3) If Donna is **eschewing** candy and soda, what is she doing?
- A. overindulging
 - B. avoiding them
 - C. eating them in moderation
 - D. eating only the all-natural versions
- 4) Using the passage as a guide, which best describes the meaning of "Forty is the new twenty"?
- A. If you are in good health and shape, being 40 can feel like 20.
 - B. When people turn 40, they are likely to say they are in their 20s.
 - C. If you are 20, and not in great shape, you can feel like you are 40.
 - D. If you stay away from junk food, you can look 40 even when you are 20.
- 5) Which is the best antonym for **innocuous**?
- A. dangerous
 - B. difficult
 - C. juvenile
 - D. mature
- 6) What is the difference between the first four paragraphs of this passage and the rest?
- A. The first highlights Donna's pride, the last shows her anger.
 - B. The first highlights the good life Donna has had, the last shows her regret.
 - C. The first highlights Donna's youth, the last shows that she has aged.
 - D. The first highlights Donna's fitness, the last shows she is out of shape.

Questions (continued):

7) Which best describes the clerk's attitude?

- A. hostile
- B. incoherent
- C. patronizing
- D. domineering

8) Which statements suggest **condescension**?

▼ Check all that are correct.

- A. It is not safe to go shopping at night.
- B. Take your dirty feet off my designer sofa.
- C. If you had studied, you would have done better on the test.
- D. If you had my fashion sense, you wouldn't have chosen that outfit to wear.

9) Which best describes the tone of this passage?

- A. angry
- B. dark
- C. lighthearted
- D. passionate

10) What is ironic about the clerk calling Donna "Ma'am"?

- A. It is not proper English.
- B. The clerk does not know Donna's name.
- C. It is a term often reserved for older people.
- D. It is unclear to whom the clerk is speaking.

Do you feel younger than you actually are? Do you feel older? Explain.
