

GED Practice Reading Test 2

WHAT'S WRONG WITH BIFF AND HAPPY? (For questions 1-5)

[Biff is talking with his brother, Happy. They are together with their parents in the home where they grew up.]

BIFF: [with rising agitation] Hap, I've had twenty or thirty different kinds of jobs since I left home before the war, and it always turns out the same. I just realized it lately. In Nebraska, when I herded cattle, and the Dakotas, and Arizona, and now in Texas. It's why I came home now, I guess, because I realized it. This farm I work on, it's spring there now, see? And they've got about fifteen new colts. There's nothing more inspiring or-beautiful than the sight of a mare and a new colt. And it's cool there now, see? Texas is cool now, and it's spring. And whenever spring comes to where I am, I suddenly get the feeling, my God, I'm not gettin' anywhere! What the hell am I doing playing around with horses, twenty-eight dollars a week! I'm thirty-four years old, I oughta be makin' my future. That's when I come running home. And now, I get here, and I don't know what to do with myself. [After a pause] I've always made a point of not wasting my life, and every time I come back here I know that all I've done is to waste my life.

HAPPY: You're a poet, you know that, Biff? You're a-you're an idealist!

BIFF: No I'm mixed up very bad. Maybe that's my trouble. I'm like a boy. I'm not married, I'm not in business, I just-I'm like a boy. Are you content, Hap? You're a success, aren't you? Are you content?

HAPPY: Hell no!

BIFF: Why? You're making money, aren't you?

HAPPY: [moving about with energy, expressiveness] All I can do now is wait for the merchandise manager to die. And suppose I get to be merchandise manager? He's a good friend of mine, and he just built a terrific estate on Long Island. And he lived there about two months and sold it, and now he's building another one. He can't enjoy it once it's finished. And I know that's just what I would do. I don't know what the hell I'm workin' for. Sometimes I sit in my apartment-all alone. And I think of the rent I'm paying. And it's crazy. But then, it's what I always wanted. My own apartment, a car, and plenty of women. And still, goddammit, I'm lonely.

-Arthur Miller, from Death of a Salesman (1949)

1. Biff has come home because

- a. he needs a vacation
- b. he isn't earning enough money at his new job
- c. he feels like he isn't getting anywhere in life
- d. he likes to be home in springtime
- e. he misses his family

2. Which of the following sentences best describes what's wrong with Happy?

- a. you can't run away from yourself
- b. money can't buy happiness
- c. what goes around, comes around
- d. good things come to those who wait
- e. money is the root of all evil

3. Which of the following sentences best describes what's wrong with Biff?

- a. he needs to stop being selfish and find someone to love
- b. he needs to grow up and stop acting like a baby
- c. he needs to pick one career and work hard until he achieves success
- d. he needs to stop moving around so much and just stay in one place
- e. he needs to accept who he is and stop searching elsewhere for happiness

4. Why isn't the merchandise manager happy?

- a. he doesn't have enough money
- b. he knows Happy is after his job
- c. the more he has, the more he wants
- d. he is lonely
- e. he didn't like the way his estate was built

5. Based on this excerpt, which of the following can we conclude about Happy's name?

- a. it is ironic
 - b. it is appropriate
 - c. it is a nickname
 - d. it is not his real name
 - e. it is symbolic
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TO WHAT LENGTHS SHOULD A PERSON GO TO OBTAIN MONEY? (For questions 6-11)

NORA. Father died on the 29th of September.

KROGSTAD. Quite correct. I have made inquiries. And here comes in the remarkable point-(Produces a paper) which I cannot explain.

NORA. What remarkable point? I don't know-

KROGSTAD. The remarkable point, madam, that your father signed this paper three days after his death!

NORA. What! I don't understand-

KROGSTAD. Your father died on the 29th of September. But look here: he has dated his signature October 2nd! Is not that remarkable, Mrs. Helmer? (NORA is silent.) It is noteworthy, too, that the words "October 2nd" and the year are not in your father's handwriting, but in one which I believe I know. Well, this may be explained; your father may have forgotten to date his signature, and somebody may have added the date at random, before the fact of your father's death was known? There is nothing wrong in that. Everything depends on the signature. Of course it is genuine, Mrs. Helmer? It was really your father himself who wrote his name here?

NORA. (After a short silence, throws her head back and looks defiantly at him.) No, it was not. I wrote father's name.

KROGSTAD. Ah!-You are aware, madam, that that is a dangerous admission?

NORA. How so? You will soon get your money.

KROGSTAD. May I ask you one more question? Why did you not send the paper to your father?

NORA. It was impossible. Father was ill. If I had asked him for his signature, I should have had to tell him why I wanted the money; but he was so ill I really could not tell him that my husband's life was in danger. It was impossible.

KROGSTAD. Then it would have been better to have given up your tour.

NORA. No, I couldn't do that; my husband's life depended on that journey. I couldn't give it up.

KROGSTAD. And did it never occur to you that you were playing me false?

NORA. That was nothing to me. I didn't care in the least about you. I couldn't endure you for all the cruel difficulties you made, although you know how ill my husband was.

KROGSTAD. Mrs. Helmer, you evidently do not realize what you have been guilty of. But I can assure you it was nothing more and nothing worse that made me an outcast from society.

NORA. You! You want me to believe that you did a brave thing to save your wife's life?

KROGSTAD. The law takes no account of motives.

-from A Doll's House, by Henrik Ibsen

6. Of what has Nora been accused?

- a. putting the wrong date on a document
- b. lying to Krogstad
- c. taking a journey when her father was ill
- d. falsifying her father's signature
- e. forgetting to have her father sign a document

7. Which conclusion can the reader draw from the dialogue?

- a. Krogstad had lent Nora's father some money
- b. Krogstad and Nora had been plotting against Nora's husband
- c. Nora didn't want her husband to know that she had borrowed money from Krogstad
- d. Nora's husband and Krogstad were business partners
- e. Nora had intentionally signed the document with the wrong date

8. Which of the following best describes the conversation between Nora and Krogstad?

- a. intimate
- b. superficial
- c. warm
- d. confidential
- e. guarded

9. What does Krogstad most likely mean by the phrase “you were playing me false”?

- a. Nora never took her debt to Krogstad seriously
- b. Nora had been gambling with her father’s money
- c. Krogstad had been deceived by Nora
- d. Nora was misinformed about her father’s death
- e. Nora betrayed Krogstad by signing the paper himself

10. Based on the dialogue, what is most likely correct about the relationship between Nora and Krogstad?

- a. they met each other through Nora’s father
- b. they have acquaintances for quite a while
- c. they were once romantically involved with each other
- d. Krogstad is representing Nora as her lawyer
- e. They just met but have heard of each other before their meeting

11. Nora asks, “You want me to believe that you did a brave thing to save your wife’s life?” What is Nora’s point?

- a. her motives justified her misdeed
- b. Krogstad’s bravery did not save his wife’s life
- c. Krogstad believes himself to be brave but is mistaken
- d. Her misdeed was no worse than Krogstad’s
- e. Krogstad lied to Nora about saving his wife’s life

Answer key:

1. c

2. b

3. e

4. c

5. a

6. d

7. c

8. e

9. c

10. b

11. a