

Question 1-11 are based on the following passage.

This passage is adapted from Linda Niehoff, “Like Magic Waiting.” ©2015 by Linda Niehoff.

We walked through the field a long time, pushing tall grass out of the way, before we saw anything. I’d pluck ticks out of my hair later and scratch red bumps. I hoped it was worth it.

Line 5 “How much longer?” I asked. I wondered now if it was just a story Tamara told in her bedroom with the window propped open and flies buzzing everywhere. There were always flies and the sour smell of hog drifting in on dusty Saturday afternoons.

10 We’d already flipped through shiny magazines and smelled their thick scent. We’d smeared watermelon polish on our nails for a moment that’d probably never come. Then we rolled the magazines up and slapped at the never-ending flies. Coming out here was the only thing left to do.

15 “Sometimes it takes a second to find,” Tamara said as she stopped and scanned the field, and I said nothing because I still wanted to believe her.

I turned back around. From here the sagging trailer was the size of a thumbprint. It was hard to believe we’d been 20 crammed inside—it seemed too small to hold us. You could block it out with a finger and make it disappear.

The late summer sun sank low in the far row of trees and looked like moving globs of light. If I squinted my eyes and let them go all blurry, it glittered just like magic waiting. Or 25 how I pictured magic might look if I could ever find it.

“Should we go back?” I asked, right as she pointed.

“There it is.”

At first I couldn’t make it out. Weeds and golden grass had pierced the wood and pushed through, making it hard to tell 30 what it had been. I was just about to ask her where when I saw the face.

Its teeth were bared in an eternal grin. A tiger. Or a lion, maybe. A few feet away lay a camel. And I thought I saw a giraffe, but it was hard to tell. The framework was gone. 35 Probably cut up and sold for firewood a long time ago.

“I told you,” she said, but I didn’t look at her.

I bent down and touched its head, the lion or tiger, and traced my newly painted nail along a red wooden vein. It was a long-ago ribbon or maybe even a rose, now bled of color 40 except for one faint crimson line that clung to its splinters and wouldn’t let go. The wood let out a rotting sigh, and the smell of damp and soil rose up like something whispered.

It looked old. And not just because of the rotting wood. It looked old-fashioned.

45 “Where’d it come from?” I asked.

“Don’t know,” Tamara said. “It’s always been here. Even my mom remembers it from when she was a girl.”

“She never rode it?”

Tamara shook her head.

50 Somebody had carved each eye, each tooth, each wild,

blowing curl and set it out in a farmer’s field. Others had stood in line, clutching sweaty coins, just to ride around in circles to the sound of a calliope. Until it wasn’t enough anymore. Or maybe there was just too much to keep it 55 standing. Too much sky pressing down, and now it was just wooden bones.

I wished I could have seen him twirling madly, head lifted high and proud, but there was still a fierceness in his gaze that not even a prison of weeds could hold. Even though the 60 earth was slowly swallowing him, it was like he wouldn’t stop fighting.

I looked up at Tamara, but I could see that she didn’t care, not really.

65 “It’s just a pile of wood,” she said when she saw how I looked at her.

But I wanted to tell her to shut up. This was haunted ground. A whole other world had moved and swallowed and ached unseen under this one with cries and laughter and screams. For a moment, I could almost hear it on the hot 70 breath of wind that brushed my cheek. I strained to listen before the cicada song rose up and sang it away. Tamara shrugged and chewed on a nail. She was already peeling off the watermelon polish.

1

A main purpose of the passage is to develop a narrative that A) entertains the reader by presenting a series of light-hearted, humorous anecdotes.

B) engages the reader by withholding information to create interest and anticipation.

C) involves the reader in an intricate mystery that the characters are unable to resolve.

D) inspires compassion in the reader by portraying a tragic event in the narrator’s life.

2

Over the course of the passage, the main focus shifts from a A) recollection of the beginning of a friendship to a portrayal of the current state of that friendship.

B) narration of an individual’s thoughts to a description of a setting.

C) depiction of a search to a reflection on the object of that search.

D) discussion of a plan to an account of that plan’s failed execution.

3

CONTINUE 

It can reasonably be inferred that the time the narrator spends with Tamara on Saturdays generally

- A) is largely focused on completing chores.
- B) involves a great deal of routine.
- C) prevents her from being outside.
- D) consists of her listening to Tamara tell stories.

4

Paragraph 6 (lines 22–25) primarily serves to provide a sense of the narrator’s

- A) longing for the extraordinary.
- B) respect and appreciation for the natural world.
- C) curiosity about her physical surroundings.
- D) alienation from those around her.

5

When the narrator observes that part of the lion or tiger is "bled of color" in line 39, she most nearly means that the color has

- A) spread over that area.
- B) harmed the wood in that area.
- C) faded from that area.
- D) been deliberately removed from that area.

6

In context, the phrase “Until it wasn’t enough anymore” in lines 53–54

(“Until it wasn’t enough anymore.”) most likely refers to which event?

- A) The wooden animals no longer resembled real creatures.
- B) People lost interest in riding on the wooden animals.
- C) The artist stopped creating new wooden figures.
- D) People decided to take apart the frame for firewood.

7

In the passage, the narrator characterizes the lion or tiger as appearing

- A) resolute.
- B) pretentious.
- C) foolish.
- D) resigned.

8

The narrator’s reaction to the ruins suggests that she is someone who

- A) engages her imagination when encountering new situations.
- B) finds herself drawn to dangerous environments.
- C) feels reluctant to let others see her emotional responses to events.
- D) exercises caution in expressing her observations.

9

Which choice provides the best evidence for the answer to the previous question?

- A) lines 32–34 (“Its . . . tell”)
- B) lines 43–44 (“It . . . old-fashioned”)
- C) lines 50–51 (“Somebody . . . field”)
- D) lines 67–70 (“A whole . . . cheek”)

10

The interactions between the narrator and Tamara suggest which main difference in their personalities?

- A) Tamara values learning about the past while the narrator is only interested in her present situation.
- B) Tamara prefers to spend time indoors while the narrator prefers to spend time outside.
- C) Tamara is eager to take risks while the narrator prefers activities that are safe.
- D) Tamara is indifferent to her surroundings while the narrator views her surroundings with awe.

11

Which choice provides the best answer to the previous question?

- A) lines 15–17 (“Sometimes . . . her”)
- B) lines 26–27 (“Should . . . is”)
- C) lines 45–47 (“Where'd . . . girl”)
- D) lines 64–67 (“It's . . . ground”)