



"At the Movies"

Reading Comprehension Assessment

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Name _____
 Date _____

• Reading Comprehension Assessment

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

At the Movies

It was one of those terribly hot days in Baltimore. We always had those for about a month between July and August. They were the days that were so hot that they made you regret ever wishing it would be summer. That day in particular was hotter than I could remember it being. The weatherman on the radio said it would get up to 104°!



Needless to say, it was too hot to do anything outside. But it was also **scorching** in our apartment. This was 1962, and I would not live in a place with an air conditioner for another ten years. So my brother and I decided to leave the apartment to find someplace indoors. I suggested the drug store, because I wanted to get a soda or malt. But he reminded me that the drug store would not let you sit there all day, especially once the afternoon rush started. My brother instead suggested we could see a movie. It was a brilliant plan.

Movie theaters were one of the few places you could sit all day and—most important—sit in air conditioning. In those days, you could buy one ticket and sit through both movies of a double feature. Then, the theater would show the same two movies again after that. If you wanted to, you could sit through them twice. Most people did not do that, but the manager at our theater, Mr. Bellow, did not mind if you did.

That particular day, my brother and I sat through both movies twice, trying to escape the heat. We bought three bags of popcorn and three sodas each. Then, we sat and watched *The Music Man* followed by *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*. We'd already seen the second movie once before. It had been at the theater since January, because Mr. Bellow loved anything with John Wayne in it. Watching it again was better than going outside, and at least *The Music Man* was new to us.

We left the theater around 8, just before the evening shows began. Mr. Bellow was expecting a big crowd for the premier of *Wonderful World of the Brothers Grimm*, so he insisted that we leave. But we returned the next day and saw the same two movies again, twice more. And we did it the next day too. Finally, on the fourth day, the heat wave broke.

Still, to this day I can sing half the songs in *The Music Man* and quote half of John Wayne and Jimmy Stewart's dialogue from *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*! Those memories are some of the few I have of the heat wave of 1962, and they're not really my memories. They're really memories of the screen, not memories of my life.

1) Based on its use in paragraph 2, the word **scorching** most nearly means

- A. very hot
- B. very dry
- C. very humid
- D. very affordable

- 2) According to the passage, when did the narrator first live in a place with an air conditioner?
- A. 1952
 - B. 1962
 - C. 1972
 - D. 1982
- 3) It can be assumed from the passage that the narrator saw *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*
- A. three times
 - B. five times
 - C. six times
 - D. more than six times
- 4) Which of the following statements best explains why the narrator and his or her brother chose to see the same movies multiple times?
- A. The drug store would not let them inside.
 - B. They wanted to avoid the heat outside.
 - C. The manager at the theater was friendly.
 - D. They were huge fans of John Wayne.
- 5) What does the narrator mean when he or she writes that the memories are “not really my memories” in the final paragraph?
- A. that he or she is remembering scenes from a film, not scenes from his or her life
 - B. that the only days of the summer of 1962 that he or she remembers are those days spent in the movie theater
 - C. that the memories are actually those of the narrator’s brother, not the narrator himself or herself
 - D. that he or she saw the films too many times and now can only remember what happened in them
- 6) In this passage, we learn about someone who watches the same movies over and over. Is there any movie or show that you have seen multiple times? Why did you watch it so much? Do you still remember specific scenes or dialogue from it? What made you remember those things? Explain.

1) **A**

Question Type: Vocabulary
scorching (*verb*): very hot.

In the second paragraph, the narrator states that “it was too hot to do anything outside. But it was also scorching in our apartment.” The use of also there suggests that the temperatures inside and outside are similar. This means that scorching must likewise mean very hot. Therefore, choice **(A)** is correct. The second paragraph only describes the heat outside and inside; it does not discuss how much moisture is in the air. Therefore, choice **(B)** is not correct, and scorching does not likely relate to very dry. The second paragraph only describes the heat outside and inside; it does not discuss how much moisture is in the air. Therefore, choice **(C)** is not correct, and scorching does not likely relate to very humid. The second paragraph only describes the heat outside and inside; it does not discuss how much things cost. Therefore, it does not follow that scorching describes the price of something, so choice **(D)** is not correct.

2) **C**

Question Type: Detail

To answer this detail question, we need to find the part of the passage where the narrator discusses air conditioning. This happens in paragraph 2, where he or she writes that “this was 1962, and I would not live in a place with an air conditioner for another ten years.” Ten years past 1962 would be 1972, so choice **(C)** is correct. The passage never mentions 1952, so choice **(A)** is not correct. Though the passage takes place in 1962, the narrator makes it clear that he or she did not yet live in a place with an air conditioner in 1962. Therefore, choice **(B)** is not correct. The passage never mentions 1982, so choice **(D)** is not correct.

3) **D**

Question Type: Detail

In the fourth paragraph, the narrator describes seeing *The Music Man* and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, adding that he or she had “already seen the second movie once before.” He or she then describes sitting through both movies twice and doing the same thing the next day and the day after that. “On the fourth day, the heat wave broke,” so the narrator stopped seeing movies. Because he or she saw the same two movies twice a day for three days, it follows that he or she saw *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* six times. However, the narrator makes it clear that he or she had already seen the film once before that, so choice **(D)** is correct. The narrator likely sat through the movie more than six times. Though the narrator went to the movies three days in a row, the passage states that he or she sat through both movies twice each day. Therefore, he or she must have seen *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* at least six times, not three times. Because of this, choice **(A)** is not correct. The passage states that the narrator went to the movies three days in a row and that he or she sat through both movies twice each day. Therefore, he or she must have seen *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* at least six times, not three times. Because of this, choice **(B)** is not correct. The passage makes it clear the narrator sat through *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* six times in the three days he or she went to the movies to escape the heat. However, it also notes that the narrator had already seen the movie once before, since it had played at the theater since January. Therefore, he or she must have seen the movie at least seven times, making choice **(C)** not correct.

4) **B**

Question Type: Global

In the second paragraph, the narrator explains that he or she and his or her brother wanted to go someplace indoors that had air conditioning. He or she explains, in the third paragraph that “movie theaters were one of the few places you could sit all day and—most important—sit in air conditioning,” so the two siblings went there the first day to do just that. It follows that they returned the next couple of days for the same purpose, and the narrator makes that clear, as they did not go on the fourth day because “the heat wave broke.” This means that they went to the movies to avoid the heat outside, so choice **(B)** is correct. The passage states that the drugstore would not let the two siblings sit all day inside it, but it does not state that it would not let them inside at all. Choice **(A)** is not correct because it is too extreme. Though the passage does imply that the movie theater’s manager, Mr. Bellow, was friendly, it does not suggest that the two siblings went into the movie theater only because of that fact. Therefore, choice **(C)** is not correct. The passage states that Mr. Bellow “loved anything with John Wayne,” implying that he was a huge fan of the actor. At no point in the passage does the narrator suggest that either he or she or his or her brother particularly liked Wayne, so choice **(D)** is not correct because it confuses information in the passage.

5) **A**

Question Type: Inference

In the final paragraph, the narrator states that he or she can remember lines of dialogue and songs from the two movies he or she saw so many times during the heat wave of 1962. He or she then adds that, “Those memories are some of the few I have of the heat wave of 1962, and they’re not really my memories. They’re really memories of the screen, not memories of my life.” This suggests that he or she can remember the things from the films, not the experience of seeing them, as though remembering the movie and not his or her own life. That is, he or she remembers the films and not reality. This means choice **(A)** is correct. Though the narrator does call the memories of parts of the two movies he or she saw in 1962 “some of the few” he or she has of the heat wave of that summer, he or she does not suggest they are the only memories he or she has. The use of “some of the few” implies that he or she has a few memories, and that the movie ones are just some of them. Therefore, choice **(B)** is not correct. The narrator never describes his or her brother or what he remembers about the heat wave of 1962. As such, choice **(C)** is not correct. The narrator does imply that he or she saw the films many times and that he or she can remember parts of them to this day, but he or she does not imply that he or she can only remember the films. Choice **(D)** is not correct, then, because it is too extreme.