



"Bullet Trains"

Reading Comprehension Assessment

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Name _____
 Date _____

• Reading Comprehension Assessment

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

Bullet Trains

If you visit Japan, you might choose to travel around the country by shinkansen train. These high-speed trains connect the major cities of Japan. They are nicknamed “bullet trains” because they go very fast and have pointy noses like a bullet.



Bullet trains are a good way to travel for several reasons other than their speed. They are very **punctual**, often leaving on time to the second. They are also comfortable. All the seats face forward, and there is plenty of leg room. Most importantly, bullet trains are very safe. In their 35-year history, there have been only a few accidents and no deaths.

The only **downside** to bullet trains is that they are expensive. A ticket to travel to another city can cost almost as much as an airline ticket would. However, if you fly, you will land at an airport at the edge of a city. Train stations are usually right in the middle of a city. This means that it is often more convenient to take a bullet train instead of flying, because you will arrive exactly where you want to be.

- 1) What kind of train does the author talk about in this passage?
 - A. shinkanset
 - B. sinkansen
 - C. shinkanse
 - D. shinkansen

- 2) These trains are nicknamed “bullet trains” because of their
 - A. safety and shape
 - B. safety and timing
 - C. speed and shape
 - D. speed and timing

- 3) This passage was most likely written for
 - A. tourists who travel to Japan
 - B. Japanese business travelers
 - C. people who are interested in Japan
 - D. people who like to learn about trains

- 4) In paragraph 2, we learn that bullet trains “are very punctual.” As used in paragraph 2, which of these people can also be described as **punctual**?
 - A. Antonio, who checks his work carefully to make sure there are no mistakes
 - B. Rochelle, who has to have her desk organized in exactly the right way
 - C. Carolyn, who always calls someone if she says she is going to
 - D. Harvey, who is never late to class even when it is raining

- 5) According to the author, bullet trains are comfortable because
- I. all the seats face forward
 - II. there is plenty of leg room
 - III. there is extra space for bags
- A. I only
 - B. I and II only
 - C. II and III only
 - D. I, II, and III
- 6) As used in the final paragraph, the word **downside** most nearly means
- A. hill
 - B. problem
 - C. argument
 - D. mistake
- 7) The author says that one reason to take a bullet train instead of flying is because the bullet train is often
- A. much faster
 - B. much cheaper
 - C. more comfortable
 - D. more convenient
- 8) To help travelers decide between a bullet train and an airplane, it would be most helpful for the author to add information about
- A. how many seats each one has
 - B. how many miles each one travels
 - C. how much time each one takes
 - D. which one most people choose
- 9) Imagine you are planning a trip to a nearby city. Would you choose to take an airplane or a bullet train to get there? Why? Support your answer using information from the passage.

1) D

Question Type: Detail

To answer this detail question correctly, we need to find where the author first discusses this kind of train in the passage. A good way to do this is to scan the topic sentence of each paragraph, since this sentence will likely tell us what information can be found in the rest of that paragraph. The topic sentence of paragraph 1 reads: "If you visit Japan, you might choose to travel around the country by shinkansen train." This lets us know that the details we are looking for can likely be found in paragraph 1. In paragraph 1, the author writes, "If you visit Japan, you might choose to travel around the country by shinkansen trains." This tells us that the author talks about shinkansen trains in this passage. Therefore (D) is correct. The passage does not provide information to support choices (A), (B), and (C). Therefore they are incorrect.

2) C

Question Type: Inference

In paragraph 1, the author writes, "They are nicknamed 'bullet trains' because they go very fast and have pointy noses like a bullet." This tells us that the trains are nicknamed "bullet trains" for their speed, because they go very fast. They are also nicknamed "bullet trains" for their shape, because they have pointy noses like a bullet. From this we can understand these trains are nicknamed "bullet trains" because of their speed and shape. Therefore (C) is correct. The passage does not provide information to support choices (A), (B), and (D). Therefore they are incorrect.

3) A

Question Type: Global

In paragraph 1, the author writes, "If you visit Japan, you might choose to travel around the country by *shinkansen* trains." This tells us that the passage is written for people who visit Japan. The information in paragraph 2 explains why visitors might choose to take these trains: they are "punctual," "comfortable," and "very safe." In paragraph 3, the author says that bullet trains are more "convenient" than airplanes, because "you will arrive exactly where you want to be" if you arrive at a train station in the middle of a city. The information in this passage can help people who travel to Japan decide whether or not to take a bullet train. From this we can understand this passage was most likely written for tourists who travel to Japan. Therefore (A) is correct. Japanese business travelers likely live in Japan, so they would not need advice about how to travel if they "visit Japan." This eliminates (B). This passage offers information specifically about *shinkansen* trains, not about Japan in general. It has more information about the trains than about Japan, so it was not likely written for people who are interested in Japan. This makes (C) incorrect. Although this passage may be interesting to people who like to learn about trains, the information is very specific in order to help people who "visit Japan" decide whether or not to take a bullet train. This means that it was not likely written for people who like to learn about trains. Therefore (D) is incorrect.

4) D

Question Type: Vocabulary

punctual (*adjective*): strictly observant of an appointed time; not late; prompt.

In paragraph 2, the author writes of bullet trains: "They are very punctual, often leaving on time to the second." This tells us that the reason the trains are punctual is because they leave on time to the second. From this we can understand that the word punctual means on time. If Harvey is never late to class even when it is raining, then he is always on time to class, so he can be described as punctual. Therefore (D) is correct. If Antonio checks his work carefully to make sure there are no mistakes, we know he is very careful, but we do not know if he is on time. This means he cannot be described as punctual. This eliminates (A). If Rochelle has to have her desk organized in exactly the right way, we know she is very neat, but we do not know if she is on time. This means she cannot be described as punctual. This makes (B) incorrect. If Carolyn always calls someone if she says she is going to, we know she is very dependable, but we do not know if she is on time. This means she cannot be described as punctual. This eliminates (C).

5) B

Question Type: Detail

To answer this detail question correctly, we need to find where the author discusses why bullet trains are comfortable in the passage. A good way to do this is to scan the topic sentence of each paragraph, since this sentence will likely tell us what information can be found in the rest of that paragraph. The topic sentence of paragraph 2 reads: "Bullet trains are a good way to travel for several reasons other than their speed." This lets us know that the details we are looking for can likely be found in paragraph 2. In paragraph 2, the author writes of bullet trains: "They are also comfortable. All the seats face forward, and there is plenty of leg room." This tells us that bullet trains are comfortable because all the seats face forward and there is plenty of leg room. This supports **option (I)** and **option (II)**. The passage does not say that bullet trains have extra space for bags. This eliminates **option (III)**. Therefore (B) is correct.

6) B

Question Type: Vocabulary

downside (*noun*): a discouraging or negative aspect; disadvantage.

In the final paragraph, the author writes, "The only downside to bullet trains is that they are expensive." To understand the meaning of the word downside, it is helpful to look at context. In the first two paragraphs, the author explains all the good things about bullet trains: they are "very fast," "on time," "comfortable," and "very safe." But being expensive is the one bad thing about bullet trains. This tells us that the only problem with bullet trains is that they are expensive. This means that in this context, the word downside most nearly means *problem*. Therefore (B) is correct. Although a *hill* has sides that go down, downside does not literally mean a side that goes down. Instead it means something bad or a problem. This eliminates (A). Although people might argue against riding the bullet trains because they are expensive, this fact itself is not an *argument* to bullet trains. This means (C) is incorrect. We can understand from the context that a downside is something bad for the passengers, but this does not mean that it is a mistake. Perhaps the trains are expensive because of the cost of running them. This means it may not be a *mistake* that the trains are expensive. This makes (D) incorrect.

7) D

Question Type: Detail

In the final paragraph, the author writes that “if you fly, you will land at an airport at the edge of a city. Train stations are usually right in the middle of a city. This means that it is often more convenient to take a bullet train instead of flying, because you will arrive exactly where you want to be.” This tells us that one reason to take a bullet train instead of flying is because the bullet train is often more convenient. Therefore **(D)** is correct. In paragraph 1, we learn that the bullet trains “go very fast,” but the author does not say that they are much faster than airplanes. This eliminates **(A)**. In the final paragraph, we learn that bullet trains are “expensive.” The author writes, “A ticket to travel to another city can cost almost as much as an airline ticket would.” This means that the train may be a little cheaper than flying, but not much cheaper. This makes **(B)** incorrect. In paragraph 2, the author writes of bullet trains: “They are also comfortable. All the seats face forward, and there is plenty of leg room.” However, the author does not say that bullet trains are often more comfortable than airplanes. This means **(C)** is incorrect.

8) C

Question Type: Global

In paragraph 1, we learn that bullet trains “go very fast.” But we do not know whether they are faster or slower than airplanes. In paragraph 2, we learn that bullet trains are “very punctual,” “comfortable,” and “very safe.” But the author does not tell us how bullet trains compare to airplanes in these three areas of timing, comfort, and safety. From this we can understand that it would be helpful for travelers deciding between a bullet train and an airplane to know more about how the two compare in terms of speed, timing, comfort, and safety. If the author added information about how much time each one takes, then travelers would know whether a bullet train or an airplane is faster. This means that of the choices given, it would be most helpful for the author to add information about how much time each one takes. Therefore **(C)** is correct. Although some travelers might be interested in knowing how many seats each one has, how many miles each one travels, or which one most people choose, none of these pieces of information would help a traveler compare a bullet train to an airplane in terms of speed, timing, comfort, or safety. This means that choices **(A)**, **(B)**, and **(D)** are incorrect.