

## Reading Benchmark #1 Review

Read each passage/story and choose the best answer for each question.

The speaker in the following poem has a plan. Read the poem to find out about that plan. Think about what the speaker plans, and then answer the questions that follow.

### Today I'm Going Yesterday

By Jack Prelutsky

Today I'm going yesterday  
as quickly as I can.  
I'm confident I'll do it,  
I've devised a clever plan.  
it involves my running backward  
at a constant rate of speed;  
if I'm mindful of my timing,  
I'll undoubtedly succeed.

Today I'm going yesterday,  
I'm moving very fast  
as I'm putting off the future  
for the rather recent past.  
I can feel the present fading  
as I hastily depart,  
and look forward to arriving  
on the day before I start.

Today I'm going yesterday  
I'm slipping out of sight  
and anticipate I'll vanish  
just a bit before tonight.  
When I reach my destination,  
I'll compose a note to say  
that I'll see you all tomorrow,  
which of course will be today.

1. A synonym for the word *devised* in line 4 is
  - A. invented
  - B. vision
  - C. device
  - D. destroyed
2. Which of the following is the main reason the speaker is running backwards?
  - A. The speaker wants to disappear from sight..
  - B. The speaker is training for a race through time.
  - C. The speaker wishes to avoid the future.
  - D. The speaker wants to depart hastily.
3. What is the theme of this poem?
  - A. having many ideas
  - B. traveling through time
  - C. going on vacation
  - D. writing a letter

4. This poem uses elements of
  - A. realistic fiction
  - B. fantasy
  - C. historical fiction
  - D. folklore
5. What is the prefix for the word *undoubtedly*?
  - A. ed
  - B. un
  - C. ly
  - D. ou
6. What is the rhyme scheme?
  - A. AABCCA
  - B. ABCCADD
  - C. ABCBDEFE
  - D. There is no rhyme scheme.
7. How many stanzas are there?
  - A. 5
  - B. 4
  - C. 3
  - D. 2

Read this passage about fire ants, and then answer the questions that follow.

### Fire Ants on the March

By Scott Norvell

*At the time it seemed like a trivial matter. In November 1989 a greenskeeper at the Hampton, VA, golf course found an ant bed in an area sodded with new grass from Georgia. "I think they're fire ants," the groundskeeper told Claude Carson, the resident pro.*

Carson had worked in South Carolina, where fire ants thrived. He knew enough about them to call the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Inspectors came like volunteers to a four-alarm blaze and walked around for hours, looking for other nests. Weekly for more than a year, they returned in search of signs that fire ants had settled in Virginia.

Five years and more than 700 documented Virginia sightings later, inspectors may be reaching the conclusion they hoped they wouldn't: the fire ant, scourge of the South, appears to be marching north.

Ants thrive everywhere, except for a couple of islands and the North and South poles. Although they each weigh only 1/10,000 of an ounce, collectively they weigh more than all the human beings on earth. Ants are an essential part of the terrain, spreading seeds and adding vast quantities of nutrients to the soil. The garbage men of the insect world, they cart off and recycle 90 percent of the world's dead insects.

*The ant's ant is the Amazon-bred Solenopsis invicta – from the Latin for "invincible." Its migration has been a natural phenomenon of awesome scale. It arrived in the United States early in this century through Mobile, Alabama, likely carried on South American timber steamers. Soon it rode roughshod over 250 million acres in 11 states.*

In the late 1940's farmers in Mississippi and Alabama began complaining about fire-ant mounds, built from the clayish soil, which hardened like two-foot boulders and tore up farm machinery. Eventually, fire ants were held responsible for killing chickens, plucking crops clean, and even blinding infants.

That was just mythology - or mostly so. In fact, fire ants are defensive by nature. But they will storm anything that threatens their mound or looks like food, be it insects, injured waterfowl,

newborn fawns or bedridden hospital patients. They latch on with barbed mandibles and sting repeatedly with spiked tails.

Fire ant venom burns humans like a hot match and causes itchy blisters that persist for days if left alone, or weeks if scratched and infected. An unlucky one or two percent of the population is allergic to proteins in the poison and can go into shock. Deaths are very rare but they do occur, mainly among the very young and the old.

*Beginning in the late 1950's, the federal government declared it would attempt to wipe out S. invicta once and for all. World War II-era bombers dusted millions of acres in the South with the highly poisonous pesticides dieldrin and heptachlor. Fire ants died, but so did birds, fish, dogs, and cattle. When the program was finally halted, the government had spent \$70 million, all in vain. Before the campaign, S. invicta had infested 90 million acres; five years later, they had spread to 126 million acres.*

Frustrated but undaunted, the feds spent another \$200 million in the late 1960's for a new eradication effort, with similar dismal results. Today there are 157 chemical formulas registered for the control of fire ants – but nothing has stopped their spread.

*If S. invicta are ever to be contained, the breakthrough will likely come at the Department of Agriculture's complex in Gainesville, Florida. There, on a steaming hot day, entomologist Dan Wojcik unloads buckets of dirt teeming with fire ants that he found in the surrounding countryside. He places a dripping hose over the swarm inside.*

Fire ants have developed a unique method to keep from drowning. At first hint of rising water, worker ants gather the entire colony into a ball – sometimes as big as a basketball. As the water overtakes the mound, the ball rides the flood like a living raft, rolling in the water so all can breathe. When they strike a solid object, be it a swimming dog or a canoe, they swarm aboard.

At Gainesville, the buckets' balled-up colonies are captured with a slotted spatula and slapped into deep plastic trays. Wojcik is studying breeding and migration patterns, where fresh insights might give new direction to control programs.

In the South, he has learned, fire ants spread at a glacial but inexorable pace. During the summer, usually after a rain, hundreds of winged ants will ascend from their mounds to mate 500 feet in the air. The males drop to the ground and die, their purpose in life fulfilled. The females, now queens, drift downward to start new colonies; on a windy day, this may be as far as five miles away. The queens burrow into holes and begin laying eggs. Two months later there will be several thousand, each queen laying 1,500 eggs a day. In a year a new colony can be 100,000 strong. The process repeats up to eight times each summer, spreading the ants 20 to 30 miles a year.

*To study S. invicta's tenacity, Wojcik's colleague David Williams sets up what he wryly refers to as "the Arena" and stages some gladiatorial games. Three plastic trays are joined together by a pipe. One side tray holds a small colony of fire ants, the other an equal number of Argentine ants – darker and slightly smaller, but with menacingly large mandibles. Some dead crickets are placed in the center tray.*

The Argentines are first to find the cricket; within 20 minutes the ants completely dominate the central arena. Meanwhile, the fire ants huddle away from the action. Then the Argentine scouts discover the fire ant tray, and all hell breaks loose. Dozens of Argentines rush toward the alien nest. The fighting is medieval in its intensity. The fire ants wave their rear ends around and spray poison. Occasionally, two combatants lock together and roll around jerkily until one dies.

The advantage quickly shifts to the fire ants, who have banded together in a tight clump. The Argentine ranks thin as more rush to their deaths. Soon the battlefield becomes littered with severed heads, legless thoraxes and antennae. By the next day, the Argentine ants have been wiped out, their brood carried off as food. "The fire ants never lose," William remarks.

With the continuing migration of fire ants, the Department of Agriculture is scrambling for that elusive solution to the problem once again. The latest scientific thinking is that by learning to communicate with the pests, man may ultimately figure out how to control them.

Robert Vander Meer, a colleague of Wojcik's, has spent the last 18 years isolating some of the chemicals used by fire ants to communicate. By decoding these compounds, scientists may be able to

interfere with what the ants tell each other, instructing them perhaps to pick up new, more effective baits or to kill their own queens, the only sure way of wiping out a colony. Another colleague is searching for more natural predators, such as a minute fly native to South America that swoops down on an exposed ant and lays an egg that eventually scours out the ant's head.

*Other scientists believe that cold weather will prove a natural barrier to large-scale migration north. *S. invicta* eggs won't grow in temperatures below 80 F., and the ants go into a coma of sorts when it's colder than 40 F. They can survive at 5 F for only a few weeks and -3 F. for a few days, but die quickly after that.*

*Not everyone is so sure, however. A new hybrid form has popped up recently in Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi, seemingly able to withstand much colder winters. Also, *S. invicta* themselves may be developing cold tolerance; in the mountains of Tennessee, they have survived one of the region's coldest winters.*

Meanwhile, pest-control officials continue their rounds, looking for new colonies and spreading their chemicals. Jim Pierce of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services sums up the fire-ant situation simply: "As fast as we kill them, more just keep coming in."

8. In paragraph 4, which point is the author making when he talks about the ants' weight?
  - A. Ants have a significant impact on people.
  - B. A huge number of ants live on Earth.
  - C. Ants are probably more important than people.
  - D. No one knows how many ants live on Earth.
9. How many times each summer do females leave fire-ant nests to start new nests on their own?
  - A. 8
  - B. 25
  - C. 1,500
  - D. 100,000
10. Why is the spread of fire ants bad for farming?
  - A. The fire ants attack livestock.
  - B. Venom from fire ants poisons the soil.
  - C. Fire-ant mounds make working in the fields very difficult.
  - D. Fire ants destroy seedlings before they grow into mature plants.
11. In paragraph 10, the word *undaunted* means
  - A. not discouraged
  - B. wasteful
  - C. not angry
  - D. flexible
12. What is a synonym for the word *angry*?
  - A. happy
  - B. sad
  - C. sick
  - D. mad

*Sometimes people have trouble making decisions. In the following story Liam does, or does he? Read the story to find out how Liam makes decisions, and then answer the questions that follow.*

## Liam McLafferty's Choice

By Alexis O'Neill

No young lad in Ireland made worse choices than Liam McLafferty of Rosmuck.

When his brother asked, "Would you rather have this apple or that apple?" Liam chose the one that spoiled first.

When his mother asked, "Would you like to spread manure or milk the cow?" Liam chose to spread manure.

When his father asked, "Would you like to come with me to the Galway fair or stay and mind the wee ones?" Liam chose to stay.

When his schoolmaster asked, "Would you like to stand in the corner or sit beside rough Kieran O'Keefe?" Liam chose to sit beside rough Kieran.

Try as he might, Liam could not make a good choice. On market day, his mother endeavored to teach him. "There now, Liam," she said. "Look at those three pigs. Which should we take home with us?"

Liam examined them closely, as all farmers did. Each pig was round and noisy. Each one would make a fine dinner. But each one looked him square in the face.

"I'll take that sack of potatoes," said Liam, and he covered his eyes as he walked away from his mother's side.

On race day, his father tried to teach him. "Look at all the fine horses. Which will cross the finish line first?" Like his father, Liam slid his hands along the horses' withers. He talked with the riders. He listened to old men placing their bets.

"The wee res mare," said Liam. When the wee red mare crossed the finish line last, Liam covered his ears to block the men's laughter.

One night, Liam heard his parents whispering by the hearth. "Liam id our oldest lad," his father said, "yet how can we leave our field to him? Sure, the land will be lost if Liam puts his hand to it."

Liam's heart broke. Before the sun rose, he walked past the fields to the sea to think. As it happened, he spied two figures upon the beach in the rosy dawn.

"Lend a hand, would you?" called a beautiful colleen as she tugged on her great green cloak, which was caught in the rocks.

"Lend a hand, would you?" croaked an old woman as she tried to hobble up a narrow path in her black shawl and red skirt.

Now, any other young man would have raced to help the beautiful girl. But not Liam McLafferty. Without so much as a second thought, he raced to the side of the wrinkled old woman.

At the top of the path, the old woman turned to him. "Tell me, Liam McLafferty, why did you choose to help me when you might have had that lovely colleen on your arm instead?"

Liam was stunned. In all his life, no one had ever asked him *why* he had chosen the way he had. The wind blew soft against his face as he stood above the rolling sea.

"Now that you ask," he said, "I thought that a young colleen might be able to free her own self from the rocks. I thought that an old woman might have more use of my arm climbing up a craggy hill."

"And the apple?" asked the woman as she rested against a rock.

"The riper the apple, the more ready the seeds are for planting," he said without stopping to wonder how she knew about the spoiled apple.

"The manure?" she asked

"Why, it helps things to grow," Liam replied.

"And why stay with the wee ones when you could have gone to the fair?" she persisted.

"They need my stories so they might tell their own someday," he said. The he thought about his other choices. "I sat beside Kieran, for who else would befriend him? As for the potatoes, don't they

nourish a family without harming a pig? And the wee red mare – well, now, I suppose I saw what she might become instead of what she was that day.”

The old woman nodded as she stood on the path. Then quick as a hare, she spun around until she was a blur of black and red. When the spinning stopped, there before Liam stood the queen of the fairy kingdom.

“Liam, for listening to your heart’s own good sense above others’ opinions, you may choose your reward.”

Och! Poor Liam! Another choice to make!

Think hard he whispered to himself. What would a smart Irish lad choose? A room full of gold! He thought. Now, wouldn’t that make Da happy? Oh better! A village full of friends! Now wouldn’t that make Ma proud? Liam thought these things, but he said nothing. He was afraid of being laughed at once again.

The fairy queen tapped her delicate foot. “Come, now, Liam. *No* choice is a choice, too.”

Liam found his voice. “All I ask is a wee dram of knowledge and the wisdom to make good choices,” he said, then cringed, afraid the fairy queen would mock him.

“’Tis yours, as it has always been. Trust it,” she said, and disappeared.

When Liam arrived at his cottage, there on his cot was a wee slip of parchment. On it were two words: TELL THEM.

The village soon spilled with tales of Liam McLafferty and the fairy queen. The laughter followed. What young man with any sense at all would choose a wisp of parchment over a fortune in gold?

Och. But Liam knew the half of it. For as he soon discovered, the words he carried with him gave him courage. With each choice he made, he explained the whys and wherefores of it. And there wasn’t a reason that didn’t make good sense to the others.

As it happened, the young colleen in the great green cape soon became his wife. With her love and his heart’s own good sense to guide him, he made his father’s land prosper. Villagers came to him for advice, and his hearth never lacked for a friendly face.

Truth be told, as the years passed, all the villagers came to agree on one thing: no young lad in the whole long history of Ireland ever made better choices than Liam McLafferty of Rosmuck.

13. In paragraph 6, the word *endeavored* means
- A. traveled
  - B. attempted
  - C. argued
  - D. surrendered
14. Liam was upset because he overheard his parents talking about
- A. the way he was wasting all their money.
  - B. how much trouble he had following directions.
  - C. whether or not he should inherit the land.
  - D. why he had such trouble making choices.
15. In paragraph 13, the word *colleen* means
- A. girl
  - B. fairy
  - C. princess
  - D. swimmer
16. Liam covered his eyes when his mother showed him the pigs at the market because
- A. he could not understand how to choose between them.
  - B. he was afraid that people would laugh at his choice.
  - C. he was ashamed his mother was treating him like a child.
  - D. he felt sorry for the pigs when they looked him in the face.

17. Liam decided to stay at home with the wee ones rather than go to the Galway fair because
- A. he was afraid that people would laugh at him at the fair.
  - B. he did not want to have to make choices at the fair.
  - C. he always preferred the country to crowded towns.
  - D. he wanted to teach his stories to the wee ones.
18. What is the suffix for the word *endeavored*?
- A. ed
  - B. en
  - C. de
  - D. vor
19. Liam's reputation for making bad choices changed after his visit by the fairy queen because
- A. the parchment the fairy queen left was magic.
  - B. the villagers respected the words of the fairy queen.
  - C. he began to explain the reasons for his choices.
  - D. suddenly he began to make much better choices.
20. Liam's reputation as a person who made terrible choices is amusing because
- A. his choices were actually made for very good reasons.
  - B. in the end he learned how to make very good choices.
  - C. he was under the influence of the queen of the fairies.
  - D. everyone thought that his choices were bad ones.
21. The writing in this story is an example of
- A. a myth.
  - B. a folktale.
  - C. a biography.
  - D. history.

*Read the passage below, and then answer the questions that follow.*

### **The Story of Grandma Moses**

By Ann Petry

The true life of Anna Robertson Moses is the amazing story of a woman who lived two lives. Her first seventy-five years were spent as a country girl and then as a farm wife and mother of ten children. Her second life, begun at age 76, was that of a professional artist.

Born in 1860 in Washington County, New York, Anna Robertson lived most of her life in the countryside where New York borders Vermont. In 1887, she married Thomas Moses, a farmer. It was not until Anna Moses was 58 that she painted her first large picture. She was wallpapering her parlor and ran out of wallpaper, so she painted a scene on a large sheet of paper to cover the fireboard. She never considered it as a piece of art, just as a part of the painting and decorating she always did in her home.

After Anna's husband died in 1927, and her youngest son and his wife took over the farm, Anna had leisure time for her art. Her first pictures were done in wool. They were needlework rather than paintings. Her pictures were always *vivid*, well-arranged scenes of rural America. She painted the countryside around her, often painting the same scene from a different angle, at a different season, on a different day.

Anna's children urged her to paint on canvas. Her first picture was painted with house paint on an old piece of canvas found in the barn. A family member took a few of her pictures to the Women's Exchange at the drugstore in Hoosick Falls. An art collector from New York City, Louis Caldor, happened to go into the drugstore and saw Anna Moses' collection of wool and oil pictures. He was amazed at the pictures and went to Anna's house to ask her to paint some pictures for his collection.

In 1939, Caldor arranged for three of Moses' paintings to be included in a show called "Contemporary Unknown American Painters" at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Caldor encouraged Anna to keep painting and sent her the finest quality art materials. Then he heard of a new art shop specializing in folk art. He showed the owner, Otto Kallir, some of Moses' work. Kallir was so impressed with Anna's work that he agreed to give her a one-artist show. This thirty-four picture show, which was held when Anna was 80, was a great success. Kallir invited Anna to the opening of the show. She replied that she did not need to come, as she had seen all of the pictures before. She seemed to have no idea of fame or of how much the public would like to meet her. A newspaper reviewer of the show, in fact, was the first to name the painter "Grandma Moses," a name that stuck with Anna from that time on.

Grandma Moses continued to paint. Art specialists had looked upon her work as interesting and appealing simply as folk art. Now her work has become widely known in the United States and abroad, and people have begun to think of her as an outstanding painter. Her combination of beautifully represented nature scenes with colorful, yet primitive, human figures became her trademark.

Grandma Moses died in 1961, more than a century after she was born. A listing of her works names more than 1,200 pictures. She led a doubly rich life and stands as a symbol of the heart of America. Grandma Moses demonstrated that opportunity for achievement and satisfaction knows no age.

23. Which of the following BEST describes Grandma Moses?
- A. simple
  - B. elegant
  - C. boastful
  - D. difficult
24. What happened after Anna's son and his wife maintained the farm?
- A. Anna moved to New York City.
  - B. Anna had more time to paint.
  - C. Anna went to work at a drugstore.
  - D. Anna stopped painting.
25. Another word for *vivid* is
- A. lifeless
  - B. striking
  - C. pale
  - D. professional
26. Grandma Moses' paintings were popular for their depiction of
- A. great events from history.
  - B. unusual shapes and images.
  - C. rural nature scenes.
  - D. urban life and people.
27. The purpose of this passage is
- A. to relate a humorous story.
  - B. to tell about the life of a famous artist.
  - C. to explain how to paint a picture.
  - D. to describe different kinds of painting.



Read this chapter from a book entitled *Maud Martha* by Gwendolyn Brooks. Think about how the girls and their mother feel about Papa and their home, and then answer the questions that follow.

## Home

By Gwendolyn Brooks

Mama, Maud Martha and Helen rocked slowly in their rocking chairs, and looked at the late afternoon light on the lawn, and at the emphatic iron of the fence and at the poplar tree. These things might soon be theirs no longer. Those shafts and pools of light, the tree, the graceful iron, might soon be viewed possessively by different eyes.

Papa was to have gone that noon, during his lunch hour, to the office of the Home Owners' Loan. If he had not succeeded in getting another extension, they would be leaving this house in which they had lived for more than fourteen years. There was little hope. The Home Owners' Loan was hard. They sat, making their plans.

"We'll be moving into a nice flat somewhere," said Mama. "Somewhere on South Park, or on Michigan, or in Washington Park Court." Those flats, as the girls and Mama knew well, were burdens on wages twice the size of Papa's. This was not mentioned now.

"They're much prettier than this old house," said Helen. "I have friends I'd just as soon not bring here. And I have other friends that wouldn't come down this far for anything, unless they were in a taxi."

Yesterday, Maud Martha would have attacked her. Tomorrow she might. Today she said nothing. She merely gazed at a little hopping robin in the tree, her tree, and tried to keep the fronts of her eyes dry.

"Well, I do know," said Mama, turning her hands over and over, "that I've been getting tired and tired of doing that firing. From October to April, there's firing to be done."

"But lately we've been helping, Harry and I," said Maud Martha. "And sometimes in March and April and in October, and even on November, we could build a little fire in the fireplace. Sometimes the weather was just right for that."

She knew, from the way they looked at her, that this had been a mistake. They did not want to cry.

But she felt that the little line of white, somewhat ridged with smoked purple, and all that cream-shot saffron, would never drift across any western sky except that in back of this house. The rain would drum with as sweet a dullness nowhere but here. The birds on South Park were mechanical birds, no better than the poor caught canaries in those "rich" women's sun parlors.

"It's just going to kill Papa!" burst out Maud Martha. "He loves this house! He *lives* for this house!"

"He lives for us," said Helen. "It's us he loves. He wouldn't want the house, except for us."

"And he'll have us," added Mama, "wherever."

"You know," Helen sighed, "if you want to know the truth, this is a relief. If this hadn't come up, we would have gone on, just dragged on, hanging out here forever."

"It might," allowed Mama, "be an act of God. God may just have reached down, and picked up the reins."

"Yes," Maud Martha cracked in, "that's what you always say – that God knows best."

Her mother looked at her quickly, decided the statement was not suspect, looked away.

Helen saw Papa coming. "There's Papa," said Helen.

They could not tell a thing from the way Papa was walking. It was the same dear little staccato walk, one shoulder down, then the other, then repeat and repeat. They watched his progress. He passed the Kennedys', he passed the vacant lot, he passed Mrs. Blakemore's. They wanted to hurl themselves over the fence, into the street, and shake the truth out of his collar. He opened his gate – the gate- and still his stride and face told them nothing.

"Hello," he said.

Mama got up and followed him through the front door. The girls knew better than to go in too. Presently Mama's head emerged. Her eyes were lamps turned on.

"It's all right," she exclaimed. "He got it. It's all over. Everything is all right."

The door slammed shut. Mama's footsteps hurried away.

"I think," said Helen, rocking rapidly, "I think I'll give a party. I haven't given a party since I was eleven. I'd like some of my friends to just casually see that we're homeowners,"

29. Papa is trying to get an extension on his loan because he
- A. has decided to move to a better location.
  - B. needs more time in order to make a payment.
  - C. plans to fix up his old house.
  - D. wants to buy the house rather than fix it.
30. In paragraph 3, what is implied by the sentence, "Those flats, as the girls and Mama knew well, were burdens on wages twice the size of Papa's."?
- A. The family could not afford to move to the nicer flats.
  - B. Mama did not want to talk about the flats anymore.
  - C. The flats were not as nice as the house.
  - D. No one was saying how she really felt.
31. In paragraph 18, which feeling do the words *hurl* and *shake* illustrate about the three who waited for Papa?
- A. Their anxiety to learn his news.
  - B. Their admiration of his calmness and patience.
  - C. Their anger at having to wait so long.
  - D. Their sadness at the thought of leaving their home.
32. How do we determine the title of a piece of writing?
- A. By the setting.
  - B. From the main idea.
  - C. From the type of writing.
  - D. From the time period in which the piece was written.
33. Which is the MAIN point of this passage?
- A. Family members should learn to get along with each other.
  - B. Some people are never satisfied with what they have.
  - C. People often attempt to make the best of a difficult situation.
  - D. Change is often an exciting part of life.
34. The word *tern* sounds like the word *turn*. These words are considered
- A. synonyms.
  - B. antonyms.
  - C. homophones.
  - D. compounds.

*It is sometimes said that "clothes make the man." In the Greek myth "Baucis and Philemon," you will discover that "clothes make the god" as well. Read the story, and then answer the questions that follow.*

### **Baucis and Philemon**

In those times, as in the period before Deucalion's flood, Zeus often descended from Olympus to Earth in order to test its inhabitants. Were they faithful in their worship of the gods? Did justice prevail among them? Was the good and bad at least equally divided among them?

To find the answer to these questions, Zeus one day decided to visit Phrygia. He called Hermes to him, and disguising themselves as simple travelers, the two gods journeyed to Earth.

They came at last to a fair city that rose above a small plain backed by gentle hills. Rows of streets lined with handsome houses presented themselves to the gods.

Sweeping his eyes along the house fronts, the Father of Gods strode to the largest and struck its door with his fist. It was opened by a house slave, who looked haughtily at the two grimy travelers and demanded to know what they wished.

"We are weary and hungry," said Zeus, "and beg rest and food."

"We have nothing here for beggars," said the slave and slammed the door in the gods' faces.

They proceeded to the next house. And the next and the next. With each it was the same. Their owners had given orders not to assist a stranger. All through the city the two gods trudged, but no one took compassion on them, no one offered them hospitality. Such behavior angered Zeus, for he was the god of beggars and travelers, who must depend on the generosity of others.

Zeus and Hermes continued their quest until it led them to the outskirts of the city, where the houses were no longer handsome and the streets no longer paved. Marching along in the dust, the two approached a tiny cabin with a roof made of reeds and a door which hung crookedly on leather straps. Zeus knocked, and the door opened slowly, scraping over a dirt floor.

An old woman peered out at the traveler on her doorstep and said in a faltering voice, "What do you wish of us, stranger?"

"We have traveled a long way," replied Zeus, "and we are tired and hungry."

The old woman stepped back. "Come in, come in," she said. "Of course, come in."

The door was so low that the gods had to stoop to enter. Once inside they were greeted by the old woman's husband, who rose to meet his guests.

"You are welcome here," he said. He placed a gentle hand on the old woman's shoulder. "This is my good wife Baucis, and I am Philemon. We have grown old together in this same cottage, and we have been content.

The old couple smiled at each other. Philemon pulled forward a rude bench and upon it Baucis spread a robe, which her gnarled fingers had woven. Philemon urged the gods to be seated, while Baucis bustled over to the little hearth where she began blowing on the ashes until a bright spark glowed. Then she broke twigs and pieces of bark and fed the fire. A blaze leaped up and the little cabin became warm and cheerful in its light.

Next she put a copper kettle on the burning sticks and filled it half full of water. Philemon brought a fresh fat cabbage from the garden behind the house and Baucis put it in the kettle. Bringing down a piece of bacon from the low rafters overhead, Philemon added this to the cabbage. All the while the two old people kept up a lively conversation with their visitors to pass time before the hungry wanderers could eat.

When the meat and the cabbage were ready, and their good smell was filling the room, Philemon pulled a couch up to the rickety table. Baucis arranged a mattress stuffed with sweet, dried grass upon the couch and covered it with the finest cloth she owned, in honor of the strangers.

Zeus and Hermes took their places on the couch, reclining as best they could in accordance with the custom for dining in those days.

And now food was placed before the gods. It was served in heavy, coarse pottery bowls, crudely shaped. The mixing bowl for the wine was of the same quality, and the wine goblets set before the guests were made of wood and lined with wax.

But no word of apology passed the old couple's lips. This was what they had; this was the best they had. And they were proud and happy that they could put food before the travelers. Philemon served the wine with a flourish, though it was hardly better than vinegar and had water added to it.

Zeus and Hermes began to eat and drink, and their appetites were hearty. Never could anyone have guessed that they were used to better fare than this. The old couple watched them with delight and kept pressing more food and drink upon them. Besides the cabbage and bacon there were olives and cherries. There were radishes and cheese and eggs roasted in their shells in the hot ashes.

But all at once, Philemon became aware of something very strange. As often as he filled the wooden goblets, the amount of wine in the mixing bowl remained the same. Now Baucis had noticed, too, and with one frightened glance between them, they flung themselves on their knees, for well they knew that they were in the presence of gods.

"Forgive us this poor fare, unfit for gods," Philemon pleaded.

But Zeus, all-wise all-father answered him, "Any food is fit for gods when generously shared."

35. The questions in the first paragraph
- A. provide the reason for the actions of Zeus and Hermes.
  - B. give examples of the kinds of questions gods answer.
  - C. predict future events that will occur in the story.
  - D. provide a flashback of previous events that will help explain future events.
36. The old couple realized their visitors were gods when the
- A. couch became covered with the finest cloth imaginable
  - B. cabin was warmed by a fire which leaped up and produced a cheerful light.
  - C. level of wine in the bowl remained the same even after much had been poured.
  - D. table was suddenly covered with plentiful food and drink.
37. In paragraph 8, the author describes the house of Baucis and Philemon to show that the
- A. old couple owned their home.
  - B. gods were hungry, tired, and thirsty.
  - C. gods felt uncomfortable in a poor house.
  - D. old couple was very poor.
38. The author uses paragraphs 13 through 20 to
- A. show the generosity with which the old couple treated their guests.
  - B. contrast the old couple with rich citizens' slaves.
  - C. demonstrate that poor people can always be counted on to help strangers.
  - D. point out how very poor the old couple was.
39. According to paragraph 17, why did Zeus and Hermes lie down on the couch at the table?
- A. The poor couple did not own any chairs.
  - B. The travelers were so tired they needed to rest.
  - C. They were following the customs of the country.
  - D. They weren't certain how mortals ordinarily ate.
40. This story is a *myth* because
- A. the author of the story is unknown.
  - B. the author teaches the reader a lesson about life.
  - C. it tells about long-ago times in ancient Greece.
  - D. it is a story based on a culture's beliefs about gods.