

“Museum Hours”

Reading Comprehension – Short Stories

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



Dear Editor,

I have just learned that our town’s public art museum will eliminate Saturday hours next month due to a **protracted** budget shortfall. Although the continued shortfall necessitates some cuts in town programs or services, Saturday museum hours are simply too important to lose.

It will be a severe hardship and loss to our town’s citizens if the museum closes on Saturdays. For many working people like myself, Saturday is the only day of the week we have to take advantage of the breathtaking and thought-provoking artwork our museum has to offer.

Parents often use this day to take their children to the museum in order to expose them to this important bit of culture.

The public museum has been a **boon** to this town since it opened in 1975. It has fostered an interest in the arts, increased cultural awareness, and had a positive impact on the local economy. Even people from many nearby towns choose Saturday—a day free from obligation—to come and see artwork here.

This is no **frivolous** matter; efforts made in this direction would be well spent. The increase of—for all intents and purposes—a nearly inconsequential amount to the homeowner tax bill would suffice to keep the museum open. Isn’t our museum worth it?

I beseech everyone who values our museum to contact his or her town representative and ask for funding to keep the Saturday museum hours intact.

Sincerely,

Maria B. Williams

Questions:

- 1) Which best describes the tone of author of this letter?
 - A. florid
 - B. genuine
 - C. hostile
 - D. obtuse

Questions (continued):

2) In order to make Maria's letter more convincing, she could have

- I. included a heartfelt appeal made by the museum curator him/herself
- II. listed other options for cultural enrichment on Saturdays
- III. added signatures to the letter of those who feel the same way

- A. I only
- B. I and III
- C. II and III
- D. I, II, and III

3) As used in paragraph 2, which is the best antonym for **protracted**?

- A. curable
- B. imagined
- C. ridiculous
- D. shortened

4) "For many working people like myself, Saturday is the only day of the week to take advantage of the breathtaking and thought-provoking artwork our museum has to offer."

The above sentence has a grammatical error—what is it and how should it be corrected?

- A. *myself* should be *me*
- B. *like* should be *such as*
- C. *breathtaking* should be *breath taking*
- D. *has* should be *had*

5) To whom might this letter be addressed?

- I. the townspeople
- II. a local newspaper
- III. federal government officials

- A. I only
- B. I and II
- C. II and III
- D. I, II, and III

6) As used in paragraph 6, which is the best antonym for **boon**?

- A. bore
- B. curse
- C. boost
- D. technicality

Questions (continued):

7) How might this type of writing best be described?

- A. comparative, meaning demonstrates the similarities and differences between two topics
- B. instructive, meaning it teaches how to do something
- C. persuasive, meaning it aims to change one's feelings about something
- D. narrative, meaning it tells a story via a sequence of events

8) As used at the end of the letter, which is the best antonym for **frivolous**?

- A. complex
- B. passionate
- C. ridiculous
- D. worthwhile

9) At the end of the letter Maria asks, "*Isn't our museum worth it?*"

What does the word *it* in the above sentence refer to?

- A. the townspeople contacting their town representatives
- B. staying open on Saturdays
- C. an increase in homeowners' tax bills
- D. lengthening the budget shortfall

10) Which of the following arguments does Maria make to keep the museum open on Saturdays?

- I. Some people can only visit the museum on Saturdays.
 - II. Parents take their children to the museum on Saturdays.
 - III. It wouldn't cost much more to individuals to keep the museum open on Saturdays.
- A. I only
 - B. I and II
 - C. II and III
 - D. I, II, and III

Answers and Explanations

1) **B**

Maria explains in the letter that closing the museum on Saturdays would create a hardship for Maria and other working people who can only enjoy the museum on Saturdays. Maria then offers a solution to the problem: the town could increase taxes on the residents to create enough revenue to keep the museum open. Finally, Maria asks the people of the town to contact their representatives to request more money so the museum can stay open on Saturdays. Since Maria has explained her problem and offered solutions, it can be inferred that Maria sincerely wants the museum to remain open on Saturdays. The tone of the letter is *genuine*. Therefore **(B)** is correct.

Florid means excessively ornate. Maria's letter did not use ornate language. Therefore, **(A)** is incorrect. Maria was not angry or accusatory in her letter, so the tone was not *hostile*. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. Maria's letter clearly expressed her dissatisfaction with a problem and clearly offered solutions. It is not dense, slow or insensitive, as *obtuse* implies. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

2) **B**

Including a heartfelt appeal by the museum curator might make the letter more convincing, because the curator is an expert about the museum and would be expected to have a worthwhile opinion about what is best for the museum. This supports **option (I)**. The letter is asking the town and its people to keep the museum open on Saturdays. Listing other options for cultural enrichment on Saturdays would provide alternatives to the museum. It would not add weight to the argument that it is important for the museum to be open on Saturdays. This eliminates **option (II)**. Adding signatures to the letter of people who feel the same way would demonstrate that the idea of keeping the museum open on Saturdays had more support. The more support the argument has, the more convincing it typically is. This supports **option (III)**. Therefore **(B)** is correct.

3) **D**

protracted (*adjective*): prolonged; drawn out; lengthened.

In paragraph 2, Maria writes, "I have just learned that our town's public art museum will be eliminating Saturday hours next month due to a **protracted** budget shortfall." Maria goes on to describe the shortfall as "continued." The reader can infer from this that protracted means long or drawn out. The opposite of drawn out is *shortened*. Therefore **(D)** is correct.

Curable means fixable. The opposite of drawn out is not fixable. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. *Imagined* means not real or thought up. The opposite of drawn out is not unreal. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. *Ridiculous* means absurd. The opposite of drawn out is not ridiculous. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect.

4) **A**

The pronoun *myself* is generally used reflexively as the direct or indirect object of a verb or as the object of a preposition: *I pinched myself to see if I*

was awake. Sometimes, it is used as emphasis: *I myself thought it was a good idea*. Use of *myself* is not appropriate if it does not refer to the subject of the sentence. Here, Saturday is the subject of the sentence. *Myself* does not refer to the subject of the sentence. Therefore **(A)** is correct.

The word *like* is appropriately used here to compare two things and can be used as a substitute for *such as*. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. The word *breathhtaking* is spelled correctly, as it is a compound word. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. The museum still *has* artwork to offer. Use of the word *had* would indicate that the museum no longer had artwork to offer, which would be wrong. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

5) **B**

At the end of the letter, Maria beseeches “everyone who values our museum to contact their town representative and ask for funding to keep the Saturday museum hours intact.” If Maria is asking the readers to contact their town representative, the intended readers must be the people of the town. This supports **option (I)**. Maria opens her letter with, “Dear Editor,” and goes on to describe what Maria perceives as a local problem and offers a solution. Since the letter is written to an editor and conveys a local concern, the reader can infer that this letter is written to a local newspaper. This supports **option (II)**. The letter only conveys a local concern, not a federal one. This eliminates **option (III)**. Therefore **(B)** is correct.

6) **B**

boon (*noun*): something useful, helpful, or beneficial.

In the middle of the letter, Maria writes that the museum has been a *boon* to the town. Maria writes that the museum “has fostered an interest in the arts, increased cultural awareness, and had a positive impact on the local economy.” The reader can infer from this that a *boon* brings about something positive or helpful. A *curse* is something that brings trouble or harm. A *curse* is the opposite of a *boon*. Therefore **(B)** is correct.

A *bore* is something that is not very interesting. Although a *bore* is not something positive, a *bore* is not the opposite of something positive. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. A *boost* is a push forward or in a positive direction, so it is similar to a *boon*. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. A *technicality* is an insignificant detail. Although an insignificant detail is different from something that has a positive impact, it is not the opposite of something that has a positive impact. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

7) **C**

Maria begins her letter with a statement that closing the museum on Saturdays will cause her and others hardship. Maria then goes on to describe the many positive effects the museum has had on the town. Maria next states that additional taxes are merited for keeping the museum open on Saturdays. Maria urges the readers to help the museum get this funding. What Maria wants is for the reader to support additional tax revenue for keeping the museum open on Saturdays. Maria attempts to convince the reader to

support this cause by showing the reader how great the museum is and how much of a hardship it would cause to close the museum on Saturdays. Maria wants to persuade the readers to support her cause. Therefore **(C)** is correct.

There is only one main topic: the closing of the art museum on Saturdays. The letter does not compare two or more topics. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. The letter does not instruct the reader about how to do anything. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. The letter does not tell a story. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

8) **D**

frivolous (*adjective*): not having any serious purpose or value; worthless.

At the end of the letter, Maria writes, “This is no **frivolous** matter; efforts made in this direction would be well spent.” Since effort would not be well spent if the matter was frivolous, the reader can infer that frivolous means worthless. *Worthwhile* is the opposite of frivolous. Therefore **(D)** is correct.

Complex means complicated, involved or intricate. Since complex things are not necessarily worthwhile, complex is not the opposite of frivolous. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. Something that is *passionate* expresses strong emotions. *Passionate* is not the opposite of worthless. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. *Ridiculous* means absurd or silly, which is not necessarily worthwhile. Ridiculous is not the opposite of frivolous. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect.

9) **C**

At the end of the letter, Maria writes, “the increase of—for all intents and purposes—a nearly inconsequential amount to the homeowner tax bill would suffice to keep the museum open. Isn’t the museum worth *it*?” The reader can infer from this that Maria believes keeping the museum open on Saturdays is worth an increase in taxes. Therefore **(C)** is correct.

At the end of the letter, Maria urges the readers to contact their town representatives, but Maria’s question “Isn’t the museum worth *it*?” does not refer to this action. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. The word *it* in Maria’s question does not refer to keeping the museum open on Saturdays. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. Maria talks about the budget shortfall at the beginning of the letter. The above-mentioned reference to *it* comes at the end of the letter and refers to the preceding sentence, not the budget shortfall mentioned at the beginning of the letter. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

10) **D**

At the beginning of the letter, Maria writes, “For many working people, like myself, Saturday is the only day of the week to take advantage of the breathtaking and thought-provoking artwork our museum has to offer.” The reader can infer from this that some people can only visit the museum on Saturdays. This supports **option (I)**. Near the beginning of the letter, Maria writes, “Parents often use this day to take their children to the museum.” This supports **option (II)**. Maria argues that keeping the museum open on Saturdays will create a relatively small tax burden, which will not be very expensive to individuals. This supports **option (III)**. Therefore **(D)** is correct.