



NMSBA Prep Grade 8 Reading Comprehension

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To the Students

Tips for Answering Multiple-Choice Questions

Multiple-choice questions have a **stem**, which is a question or incomplete sentence followed by four answer choices. You should select only one answer choice. The following are some tips to help you correctly answer multiple-choice questions on the NMSBA test:

- Read each passage carefully.
- Read each question and think about the answer. You may look back to the reading passage as often as necessary.
- Answer all questions on your answer sheet. Do not mark any answers to questions in your test booklet.
- For each question, choose the best answer and completely fill in the circle in the space provided on your answer sheet.
- If you do not know the answer to a question, skip it and go on. You may return to it later if you have time.
- If you finish the section of the test that you are working on early, you may review your answers in that section only. Don't go on to the next section of the test.

Tips for Answering Open-Ended Questions

Remember to:

- Read the question carefully. Be sure you understand it before you begin writing.
- Be sure your essay has a main idea. This should be in your introduction.
- Support your main idea with details, explanations, and examples.
- State your ideas in a clear sequence.
- Include an opening and a closing.
- Use a variety of words and vary your sentence structure.
- Check your spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.
- Write neatly.

CHILE: THE LONG ROAD OF CHANGE

Chile is a nation on the western coast of South America. It is an unusually narrow country—less than 265 miles wide—but it is extremely long. Reaching almost 3,000 miles north to south, Chile extends along more than half of the continent. Along that distance, Chile varies from lush forests to farmlands to desolate deserts. On its eastern border are the Andes Mountains and on the west is the Pacific Ocean. Chile is a land with many variations in its landscape. These variations mirror the many transitions Chile has undergone as a country.

The First Chileans

The story of Chile began about 10,000 years ago when nomadic native groups began settling along South America's coasts. One group, known as the Mapuche, chose the coastal valleys as their home. These valleys had some fertile soil for planting and hosted abundant game for hunting. Much of the area was hard to reach, and this kept the Mapuche safe from invasion for thousands of years. Even the mighty Inca empire failed to harness the Mapuche. Though the Inca spread across much of South America, they found the coastal land too harsh and isolated and could not establish a tight grip on it.

The Mapuche people remained safe from outsiders' interference until the 1500s, when explorers from Portugal and Spain stumbled across the land. The Spanish force arrived from neighboring Peru in search of gold and, five years later, decided to begin a colony on the Mapuche people's territory.

The Name "Chile"

The colony came to be known as Chile, but the exact origin of that name is disputed. Some believe that it was derived from the name of a tribal chief who helped to ensure that the Inca did not overtake the land. Others think that Chile was named after a similar-looking area in Peru. Some less likely theories suggest that the country was named after the sound of its birds' songs. The best explanation for the name is that it comes from a Mapuche word meaning "where the land ends." The Mapuche, at first, did not know their neighbors and may have thought that theirs was the world's only civilization.

Independence from Spain

Though Chile did not yield any great golden treasures for the Spanish, the colonists began establishing towns and farms. The native Mapuche, however, resented the Spanish invasion and, for the next hundred years, battled with the colonists. As generations passed, the various peoples of Chile found a sense of pride in their nationality. Around 1810, Chileans began pushing for independence from Spain; after a long struggle, Chile declared its victory.

Chile quickly became a force to be reckoned with and a democratic republic. However, the lives of most of its people did not improve. Wealthy landowners held great influence over the government while the native Mapuche people, along with poor farmers, suffered greatly. Through a series of treaties and wars, the divisions among Chile's people became even more severe.

Conflicts and Resolutions

By the 1920s, the people of Chile were demanding change. They elected reformist presidents who promised better lives for the people but consistently failed to provide them. Great dissatisfaction spread through Chile and several military groups within the country began attempting to take control. For decades, Chile was alternately run by military dictators and elected presidents.

When the Chilean government finally began to *stabilize*, the economy suddenly failed. A great depression fell over the people and, once again, fighting erupted. By the end of the battles, Chile's president had been overthrown and the country was controlled by a dictator, General Augusto Pinochet. Pinochet proved to be cruel and oppressive. By the end of his reign which lasted from 1973 to 1990, he had begun to give the people of Chile some rights—rights that they used to remove Pinochet from power.

Since then, Chile has entered a period of relative peace. Elected presidents have replaced dictators as the Chilean people struggle onward in their search for balance and prosperity. In January 2006, Michelle Bachelet, a pediatrician and a former minister of health and defense, was elected president of Chile.

An Enduring Culture

The Chileans have a long history and a strong, diverse culture. Over the centuries, their nation has been influenced by the Inca, Spanish colonists, and English and French traders. Each of these groups has left an impression on the people of Chile. For instance, one of Chile's traditional songs, the *tonada*, is a mixture of native and Spanish sounds and words.

Song is just one form of expression for which the people of Chile have become well known. Chile has also produced a number of celebrated writers, including Nobel Prize winners Pablo Neruda and Gabriela Mistral. Due to the accomplishments of Chile's wordsmiths, the country has nicknamed itself *pais de poetas*—the “land of poets.”

- 1 The author *most* likely wrote this article to—
- A inform readers about a certain country
 - B compare one country with its neighbors
 - C persuade people to visit South America
 - D tell a story about Spanish explorers

Think about the article you've just read. What information did the author try to give? What is the purpose of the article? The author did mention Peru, one of Chile's neighbors, but he doesn't make any comparison (answer choice B). He makes no attempt to draw new visitors to South America (answer choice C), and no part of this article is written in a narrative, or "story," style (answer choice D). The author's main purpose in writing is to inform readers about a country, namely Chile. Answer choice A is best.

- 2 What is the Chileans *main* conflict after winning their independence from Spain?
- A They had a weak leader.
 - B They lacked education.
 - C They had poor soil for farming.
 - D They did not have much wealth.

If you're not sure of the answer to this question, reread the information under the subheading, "Independence from Spain." Chile had many unsuccessful leaders, not just one weak leader (answer choice A). The article doesn't mention whether Chileans were educated (answer choice B). While the author says in the beginning of the article that Chile had poor soil (answer choice C), this wasn't the country's biggest problem after winning its independence. Answer choice D is the best answer; the author says that the people were poor and suffering.

- 3 Spanish explorers first traveled to Chile because—
- A the coast of Chile was easy to reach by boat
 - B the country was the only one controlled by Incas
 - C they wanted access to Chile's rich farmland
 - D they hoped to find golden treasures in Chile

If you don't remember what caused the Spanish to move into Chile, you can look back to the article. The article does not mention boats (answer choice A), and says that Chile was not completely under Inca influence (answer choice B). Although the Spanish might have made good use of the rich farmland (answer choice C), that's not the reason they went to Chile. According to the article, the reason is that the Spanish sought golden treasures (answer choice D).

4 Read the following sentence from the article and then answer the question.

“For decades, Chile was alternately run by military dictators and elected presidents.”

The author probably chooses these words to show that—

- A generals and presidents alike tried to rule in Chile
- B the army has played a large part in Chilean society
- C elected presidents need army support to hold power
- D citizens tend to vote for former military generals

This question asks you to read a sentence from the article and decide what the author meant by it. Does the above sentence mean that generals and presidents both tried to rule (answer choice A)? That seems likely, but read all the choices before making a decision. Answer choice B may also be true, but it seems to be a more general statement. Answer choice C is not correct, because the article tells us that military leaders and presidents worked against one another. Also, answer choice D is not related to the article. Answer choice A is best.

5 What is the meaning of *stabilize* as used in the article?

- A Grow steady
- B Lose money
- C Treat people poorly
- D Gain world power

This question asks about an unknown word from the article. Look back to the eighth paragraph and read the sentence that contains this word. The sentence talks about Chile’s government finally improving when the economy suddenly breaks down. The paragraph and the sentences in it should give you clues as to the meaning of the word. You can also look at the word itself; stabilize sounds like stable, which means steady. Using this evidence, you can find that answer choice A is best.

- 6** Explain how General Pinochet changed the country of Chile. Then explain why his removal from office also led to change. Be sure to write your response in your answer document.

This question asks you to determine the effect of one man’s reign over Chile, and the effects of his removal from power. Since you have to answer this question with one or more written paragraphs, you should look back to the article to refresh your memory and gather information. Look for mention of Pinochet and modern changes in Chile. Since this question has two parts, be sure to address them both thoroughly. First, tell how Pinochet changed life in Chile. Then, explain how Chile changed again once Pinochet was removed from power.

Sample answer:

According to the article, presidents and dictators competed for control of Chile during the 1900s. One dictator, General Augusto Pinochet, took charge. At first he was cruel to the people and took away their rights. This made the people upset and made them want freedom. When Pinochet gave the people their rights back, they used their new powers to remove him from office. The author goes on to say that ever since the people got some power and removed Pinochet, they have been electing presidents and moving toward a more balanced society.

THE CAPTIVE

from "Stories of Missouri" by John R. Musick

There is no more beautiful and thrilling tale of early pioneer days than the story of Helen Patterson. She was born in Kentucky; but while she was still a child her parents removed to St. Louis County, Missouri, and lived for a time in a settlement called Cold Water, which is in St. Ferdinand township. About the year 1808 or 1809, her father took his family to the St. Charles district, and settled only a few miles from the home of the veteran backwoodsman, Daniel Boone.

At the time of this last removal, Helen was about eighteen years of age. She was a very religious girl, and had been taught to believe that whatever she prayed for would be granted.

Shortly after the family had settled in their new home, bands of prowling savages began to roam about the neighborhood. The [American] Indians would plunder the cabins of the settlers during their absence, and drive away their cattle, horses, and hogs.

One day business called all the Patterson family to the village, except Helen. She was busily engaged in spinning, when the house was surrounded by nine [American] Indians. Resistance was useless. She did not attempt to escape or even cry out for help; for one of the savages who spoke English gave her to understand that she would be killed if she did so.

She was told that she must follow the [American] Indians. They took such things as they could conveniently carry, and with their captive set off on foot through the forest, in a northwestern direction. The shrewd girl had brought a ball of yarn with her, and from this she occasionally broke off a bit and dropped it at the side of the path, as a guide to her father and friends, who she knew would soon be in pursuit.

This came very near being fatal to Helen, for one of the [American] Indians observed what she was doing, and raised his hatchet to [harm] her. The others interceded, but the ball of yarn was taken from her, and she was closely watched lest she might resort to some other device for marking a trail.

It was early in the morning when Helen was captured. Her parents were expected to return to the cabin by noon, and she reasoned that they would be in pursuit before the [American] Indians had gone very far. As the savages were on foot, and her father would no doubt follow them on horseback, he might overtake them before dark. The uneasiness expressed by her captors during the afternoon encouraged her in the belief that her friends were in pursuit.

A little before sunset, two of the [American] Indians went back to reconnoiter, and the other seven, with the captive, continued on in the forest. Shortly after sunset, the two [American] Indians who had fallen behind joined the others, and all held a short consultation, which the white girl could not understand.

The conference lasted but a few moments, and then the savages hastened forward with Helen to a creek, where the banks were sloping, and the water shallow enough for them to wade the stream. By the time they had crossed, it was quite dark. The night was cloudy, and distant thunder could occasionally be heard.

The [American] Indians hurried their captive to a place half a mile from the ford, and there tied her with strips of deerskin to one of the low branches of an elm. Her hands were extended above her head, and her wrists were crossed and tied so tightly that she found it impossible to release them. When they had secured her to their own satisfaction, the [American] Indians left her, assuring her that they were going back to the ford to shoot her father and his companions as they crossed it.

Helen was almost frantic with fear and grief. Added to the uncertainty of her own fate was the knowledge that her father and friends were marching right into an [American] Indian *ambuscade*.

In the midst of her trouble, she did not forget her pious teaching. She prayed God to send down his angels and release her. But no angel came. In her distress, the rumbling thunders in the distance were unheard, and she hardly noticed the shower until she was drenched to the skin.

The rain thoroughly wet the strips of deerskin with which she was tied, and as they stretched she almost unconsciously slipped her hands from them. Her prayer had been answered by the rain. She hastily untied her feet, and sped away toward the creek. Guided by the lightning's friendly glare, she crossed the stream half a mile above the ford, and hastened to meet her father and friends.

At every flash of lightning she strained her eyes, hoping to catch sight of them. At last moving forms were seen in the distance, but they were too far away for her to determine whether they were white men or [American] Indians. Crouching down at the root of a tree by the path, she waited until they were within a few rods of her, and then cried in a low voice, "Father! Father!"

"That is Helen," said Mr. Patterson.

She bounded to her feet, and in a moment was at his side, telling him how she had escaped. The rescuing party was composed of her father and two brothers, a neighbor named Shultz, and Nathan and Daniel M. Boone, sons of the great pioneer, Daniel Boone.

She told them where the [American] Indians were lying in ambush, and the frontiersmen decided to surprise them. They crossed the creek on a log, and stole down to the ford, but the [American] Indians were gone. No doubt the savages had discovered the escape of the prisoner, and, knowing that their plan to surprise the white men had failed, became frightened and fled.

Helen Patterson always believed it was her prayers that saved her father, her brothers, and herself in that trying hour.

- 1 What would the author *most* likely describe if he added another paragraph?
- A Why the American Indians captured Helen
 - B The adventures of the elder Daniel Boone
 - C How Helen recovered from her ordeal
 - D The ways people lived in pioneer days
- 2 What is the meaning of *ambuscade* as used in the story?
- A Trap
 - B Lie
 - C Shooting
 - D Capture

- 3 What factors made Helen's escape back to her family so difficult? Be sure to write your response in your answer document.

Robert Service was born in Preston, Lancashire, England. His parents were Scottish. He spent his childhood in Scotland. He attended the University of Glasgow. His vagabond career took him throughout the world. He worked at a wide variety of jobs, from cook to clerk, from hobo to correspondent. He emigrated to Canada in 1894. He took a job with the Canadian Bank of Commerce. He was stationed for eight years in Whitehorse, Yukon. It was while in the Yukon that he published his first book of poems, *Songs of a Sourdough*. It was to make him famous.

Writing became a career. He was a correspondent for *The Toronto Star* during the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913. He was an ambulance driver and correspondent in France during World War I. He settled in France after World War I and married a French woman.

“THE MEN THAT DON’T FIT IN”

by Robert W. Service

There’s a race of men that don’t fit in,
A race that can’t stay still;
So they break the hearts of kith and kin,
And they roam the world at will.
They range the field and they rove the flood,
And they climb the mountain’s crest;
Theirs is the curse of the gypsy blood,
And they don’t know how to rest.

If they just went straight they might go far;
They are strong and brave and true;
But they’re always tired of the things that are,
And they want the strange and new.
They say: “Could I find my proper groove,
What a deep mark I would make!”
So they chop and change, and each fresh move
Is only a fresh mistake.

And each forgets, as he strips and runs
With a brilliant, fitful pace,
It’s the steady, quiet, plodding ones
Who win in the lifelong *race*.
And each forgets that his youth has fled,
Forgets that his prime is past,
Till he stands one day, with a hope that’s dead,
In the glare of the truth at last.

He has failed, he has failed; he has missed his chance;
He has just done things by half.
Life's been a jolly good joke on him,
And now is the time to laugh.
Ha, ha! He is one of the Legion Lost;
He was never meant to win;
He's a rolling stone, and it's bred in the bone;
He's a man who won't fit in.

1 Which word *best* describes “men that don't fit in” as the get older?

- A Silly
- B Tired
- C Regretful
- D Satisfied

2 Read the following stanza from the poem and then answer the question.

“They range the field and they rove the flood,
And they climb the mountain's crest;
Theirs is the curse of the gypsy blood,
And they don't know how to rest.”

The author probably chooses to write “They range the field and they rove the flood” to show that the men—

- A go hunting for food
- B are often restless
- C try to help people
- D hope to find homes

3 What is the meaning of *race* as used in the poem?

- A Run
- B Group
- C Time
- D Contest

4 Think about how the poet describes the men in the poem. Which do you think the poet thinks is best: a steady, quiet, plodding life, or a wild, wandering adventurous life? Why? Be sure to write your response in your answer document.
