

• Reading Comprehension 6 Level 5

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

What do you do with your orange peels and corn cobs after you are done eating? Most people throw them in the trash can. But food leftovers do not have to go into the trash. They are biodegradable, which means that they can be broken down by bacteria into natural materials. People who like to garden often put their fruit and vegetable scraps in a special place known as a compost pile.

A compost pile is a spot outdoors where food waste can break down into compost, which gardeners use. This process takes several months. Once the compost is created, people spread this mixture in their gardens to add nutrients to the soil. The compost in the soil helps new plants grow in the garden.

How do you take care of a compost pile? It needs air, water, and heat. Bacteria and other microorganisms break down the food waste into more basic elements like water and carbon dioxide. This process requires oxygen, so people use a shovel to turn compost regularly and help air reach all parts of the pile. The pile cannot dry out, so it should be covered to keep moisture in. Finally, heat speeds up the process. This means a compost pile should be in the sun for at least part of the day.

Food leftovers are not the only things that turn into compost. You can also add yard waste like grass clippings, dried leaves, and straw. In fact, you should add these things to create a healthy balance in your compost. But do not add any weeds to your compost pile unless you want to grow weeds in your garden! Sometimes seeds are left behind in the compost. This can be a welcome surprise if you find a tomato plant **sprouting** where you had not planted one. The tomato seed was hiding in the compost, waiting to begin a new life in the garden.

Questions

- 1) Gardeners use compost to
 - A. reduce the amount of trash on the planet
 - B. break down food waste
 - C. add nutrients to the soil
 - D. take care of bacteria and other microorganisms

- 2) To take care of a compost pile you have to
 - I. turn it regularly
 - II. cover it
 - III. make sure it is in the sun for at least part of the day
 - A. I only
 - B. I and II only
 - C. II and III only
 - D. I, II, and III

- 3) People should start a compost pile if they
- A. need compost right away
 - B. do not like to garden
 - C. want to put their food waste to good use
 - D. eat oranges and corn
- 4) You should not put weeds in a compost pile because
- A. they do not create a healthy balance
 - B. food leftovers are the only things that turn into compost
 - C. you do not want surprise plants growing in your garden
 - D. the seeds can create new weeds in your garden
- 5) As used in the final paragraph, **sprouting** most nearly means
- A. blooming
 - B. growing
 - C. appearing
 - D. hiding
- 6) The author apparently believes that a tomato plant
- A. is not a weed
 - B. should not go in a compost pile
 - C. is the best thing a gardener can grow
 - D. requires compost to grow

Answers and Explanations

1) **C**

To answer this detail question correctly, we need to find where the author discusses how gardeners use compost 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: "A compost pile is a spot outdoors where food waste can break down into compost, which gardeners use." This lets us know that the details we are looking for can likely be found in paragraph 2. In paragraph 2, the author tells us, "Once the compost is created, people spread this mixture in their gardens to add nutrients to the soil." This means that gardeners use compost to add nutrients to the soil. Therefore **(C)** is correct. Although putting food waste into a compost pile instead of the trash could reduce the amount of trash on the planet, the author does not tell us that this is why gardeners use it. This means **(A)** is incorrect. The author tells us that a compost pile is used to break down food waste, but the compost itself is what is created in the compost pile. The compost is not used to break down food waste. Instead, it is the product of this process, and it is used in gardens. This makes **(B)** incorrect. While bacteria and other microorganisms help break the food waste down into compost, gardeners do not use the compost to take care of bacteria and other microorganisms. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

2) **D**

To answer this detail question correctly, we need to find where the author discusses how to take care of a compost pile 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 3 reads: "How do you take care of a compost pile?" This lets us know that the details we are looking for can likely be found in paragraph 3. In paragraph 3, the author writes, "This process requires oxygen, so people use a shovel to turn compost regularly and help air reach all parts of the pile." This means that to take care of a compost pile, you have to turn it regularly. This supports **option (I)**. In paragraph 3, the author writes, "The pile cannot dry out, so it should be covered to keep moisture in." This means that to take care of a compost pile, you have to cover it. This supports **option (II)**. In paragraph 3, the author writes, "Finally, heat speeds up the process. This means a compost pile should be in the sun for at least part of the day." This means that to take care of a compost pile, you have to make sure it is in the sun for at least part of the day. This supports **option (III)**. Therefore **(D)** is correct.

3) **C**

In paragraph 1, the author explains that "food leftovers do not have to go into the trash." Then he or she writes, "People who like to garden often put their fruit and vegetable scraps in a special place known as a compost pile." This tells us that a compost pile is a way to put food waste to good use. The rest of the passage describes how a compost pile works, what you must do to take care of it, and how it helps new plants grow. From this we can understand that people should start a compost pile if they want to put their food waste to good use in the garden instead of throwing it in the trash. Therefore **(C)** is correct. In paragraph 2, the author writes, "A compost pile is a spot outdoors where food waste can break down into compost. This process takes several months." This tells us that if someone needs compost right away, it will not help them to start a compost pile, because it will be a few months before they have any compost. This eliminates **(A)**. The passage suggests that a compost pile is only useful to "people who like to garden," because they mix the compost with the soil to grow new plants in the garden. This means that someone who does not like to garden probably should not start a compost pile. This means **(B)** is incorrect. In paragraph 1, the author says that orange peels and corn cobs are two examples of things that turn into compost. However, this does not mean that everyone who eats oranges and corn should start a compost pile. A compost pile is only useful to people who like to garden and who have the time and interest to take care of it. This makes **(D)** incorrect.

4) **D**

In the final paragraph, the author warns, "But do not add any weeds to your compost pile unless you want to grow weeds in your garden! Sometimes seeds are left behind in the compost." This means that the seeds of weeds can be left behind in the compost and turn into new weeds in the garden. Next, the author gives an example of what can happen to leftover seeds: "This can be a welcome surprise if you find a tomato plant sprouting where you had not planted one. The tomato seed was hiding in the compost, waiting to begin a new life in the garden." From this we can understand that a tomato seed that hides and turns into a tomato plant is a "welcome surprise," but that a seed that hides and turns into a weed in the garden would be an unpleasant surprise. This means you should not put weeds in a compost pile because the seeds can create new weeds in your garden. Therefore **(D)** is correct. In the final paragraph, the author advises adding "yard waste like grass clippings, dried leaves, and straw" to a compost pile "to create a healthy balance in your compost." But he or she does not suggest that the reason you should not add weeds is because it does not create a healthy balance. Instead, the author suggests that the problem with weeds is that leftover seeds can turn into new weeds. This makes **(A)** incorrect. In the final paragraph, the author tells us that "food leftovers are not the only things that turn into compost," so **(B)** is incorrect. The author says that a tomato seed that turns into a plant is a "welcome surprise," so we can understand that sometimes you might want surprise plants growing in your garden. This means **(C)** is incorrect.

5) **B**

sprout (*verb*): to begin to grow; to give off shoots or buds.

In the final paragraph, the author writes that sometimes seeds hide in a compost pile and turn into new plants. He or she says, "This can be a welcome surprise if you find a tomato plant sprouting where you had not planted one." From this we can understand that a tomato plant is growing from a seed that was hidden in the compost instead of planted on purpose. This tells us that *sprouting* means *growing*. Therefore **(B)** is correct. We know that a tomato plant is beginning to grow, but the author does not suggest that it is *blooming* or that it has flowers. This means that **(A)** is not the best choice. Although the tomato plant is *appearing* in the garden, this word is not as specific as *growing*. The tomato plant does not just show up in the garden, it grows there. This eliminates **(C)**. The author says that the tomato seed was *hiding* in the compost, but this does not mean that the tomato plant is hiding in the garden. This makes **(D)** incorrect.

6) **A**

In the final paragraph, the author writes: "But do not add any weeds to your compost pile unless you want to grow weeds in your garden! Sometimes seeds are left behind in the compost. This can be a welcome surprise if you find a tomato plant sprouting where you had not planted one. The tomato seed was hiding in the compost, waiting to begin a new life in the garden." This tells us that the author believes that having weeds grow in the garden is a bad thing, but that a tomato plant can be a "welcome surprise," or a good thing. From this we can understand that the author apparently believes that a tomato is not a weed. Therefore **(A)** is correct. The author does not suggest that a tomato plant should not go in a compost pile. On the contrary, he or she says that "fruit and vegetable scraps" can go in the compost pile. This eliminates **(B)**. The author says that a tomato plant can be a "welcome surprise," but this does not suggest that the author believes that a tomato plant is the best thing a gardener can grow. This makes **(C)** incorrect. The author says in paragraph 2 that "the compost in the soil helps new plants grow in the garden." However, he or she does not suggest that any plants require compost to grow. This means **(D)** is incorrect.