

## • Reading Comprehension 2 Level 12

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

Concussions are brain injuries that occur when a person receives a blow to the head, face, or neck. Although most people who suffer a concussion experience initial bouts of dizziness, nausea, and drowsiness, these symptoms often disappear after a few days. The long-term effects of concussions, however, are less understood and far more severe. Recent studies suggest that people who suffer multiple concussions are at significant risk for developing chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), a degenerative brain disorder that causes a variety of dangerous mental and emotional problems to arise weeks, months, or even years after the initial injury. These psychological problems can include depression, anxiety, memory loss, inability to concentrate, and aggression. In extreme cases, people suffering from CTE have even committed suicide or homicide. The majority of people who develop these issues are athletes who participate in popular high-impact sports, especially football. Although new sports regulations and improvements in helmet technology can help protect players, amateur leagues, the sports media, and fans all bear some of the responsibility for reducing the incidence of these devastating injuries.

Improvements in diagnostic technology have provided substantial evidence to link severe—and often fatal—psychological disorders to the head injuries that players receive while on the field. Recent autopsies performed on the brains of football players who have committed suicide have shown advanced cases of CTE in every single victim.

In response to the growing understanding of this danger, the National Football League (NFL) has revised its safety regulations. Players who have suffered a head injury on the field must undergo a “concussion sideline assessment”—a series of mental and physical fitness tests—before being allowed back in the game. In an effort to diminish the amount of head and neck injuries on the field, NFL officials began enforcing stricter penalty calls for helmet-to-helmet contact, leading with the head, and hitting a defenseless player. Furthermore, as of 2010, if a player’s helmet is accidentally wrenched from his head during play, the ball is immediately whistled dead. It is hoped that these new regulations, coupled with advances in helmet design, will reduce the number of concussions, and thus curb further cases of CTE.

Efforts by the NFL and other professional sports leagues are certainly **laudable**; we should commend every attempt to protect the mental and physical health of players. However, new regulations at the professional level cannot protect amateur players, especially young people. Fatal cases of CTE have been reported in victims as young as 21. Proper tackling form—using the arms and shoulders to aim for a player’s midsection—should be taught at an early age. Youth, high school, and college leagues should also adopt safety rules even more stringent than those of the NFL. Furthermore, young athletes should be educated about the serious dangers of head injuries at an early age.

Perhaps the most important factor in reducing the number of traumatic brain injuries, however, lies not with the players, the coaches, or the administrators, but with the media and fans. Sports media producers have become accustomed to showcasing the most aggressive tackles and the most intense plays. NFL broadcasts often replay especially violent collisions while the commentators marvel at the players’ physical prowess. Some **sports highlights television programs** even feature weekly countdowns of the “hardest hits.” When the media **exalts** such dangerous behavior, professionals are rewarded for injuring each other on the field and amateurs become more likely to try to imitate their favorite NFL athletes. Announcers, commentators, television producers, and sportswriters should engage in a collective effort to cease glorifying brutal plays. In turn, fans should stop expecting their favorite players to put their lives on the line for the purposes of entertainment. Players must not be encouraged to trade their careers, their health, their happiness, and even their lives for the sake of a game.

## Questions

- 1) Based on information in the passage, it can be inferred that all of the following statements are true except
- A. tackling is not always dangerous; however, players who use improper tackling form may injure others
  - B. scientists have established a definitive link between players who die untimely deaths and the onset of CTE
  - C. NFL officials have done little to address the problem of CTE
  - D. athletes who are praised for exceptionally brutal hits are likely to continue engaging in such dangerous behavior
  - E. the NFL has done more to mitigate future cases of CTE than youth, high school, or college leagues have done
- 2) According to the passage, which of the following factors contribute(s) to the incidence of CTE in amateur players?
- I. inconsistent application of safety regulations for all levels
  - II. lack of education about the dangers of head injuries
  - III. amateur players' desire to emulate professionals
- A. I only
  - B. II only
  - C. I and II only
  - D. II and III only
  - E. I, II, and III
- 3) As used in paragraph 3, which is the best synonym for **laudable**?
- A. praiseworthy
  - B. ineffectual
  - C. memorable
  - D. audacious
  - E. satisfactory
- 4) The author's tone in the final paragraph can best be described as
- A. remorseful
  - B. hopeless
  - C. perplexed
  - D. insistent
  - E. arrogant
- 5) As used in the final paragraph, which is the best antonym for **exalts**?
- A. mitigates
  - B. venerates
  - C. mollifies
  - D. expedites
  - E. castigates

- 6) In describing the sports media, the author emphasizes its
- A. responsibility
  - B. entertainment value
  - C. senselessness
  - D. danger
  - E. sensationalism
- 7) In the final paragraph, the author mentions “sports highlights television programs” as an example of how
- I. the media glorifies violence
  - II. amateurs learn to mimic professional athletes
  - III. professional athletes gain approval
- A. I only
  - B. II only
  - C. I and II only
  - D. II and III only
  - E. I, II, and III
- 8) In the last sentence of this passage, the author writes, "Players must not be encouraged to trade their careers, their health, their happiness, and even their lives for the sake of a game." Which of the following literary devices is used in this quotation?
- A. *Irony*, characterized by the use of words to convey a meaning that is the opposite of its literal meaning. In irony, the deeper, real layer of significance is revealed by the situation and the context in which they are placed and not by the words themselves.
  - B. *Climax*, characterized by the arrangement of words, phrases, or causes in an order of ascending power that culminates into the highest or most intense point. This works to deliver the main action or integral message to the reader in a powerful way.
  - C. *Authorial intrusion*, characterized by a point at which the author speaks out directly to the reader. This establishes a one to one relationship between the writer and the reader where the latter is no longer a secondary player or an indirect audience to the progress of the story but is the main subject of the author’s attention.
  - D. *Hyperbole*, characterized by the use of specific words and phrases that exaggerate and overemphasize the core of the statement in order to produce a grander, more noticeable effect. This usually works to convey an action or sentiment that is generally not realistically possible or plausible but helps to emphasize an emotion
  - E. *Anastrophe*, in which the order of the noun and the adjective in the sentence is exchanged. In standard parlance and writing the adjective comes before the noun but when one is employing an anastrophe the noun is followed by the adjective. This reversed order creates a dramatic impact and lends weight to the description offered by the adjective.

## Answers and Explanations

1) **C**

In paragraph 2, the author lists ways in which the NFL has tried to combat the problem of CTE, such as “concussion sideline assessments,” “stricter penalty calls,” and a rule that the ball must be “whistled dead” as soon as a player accidentally loses his helmet during play. This means it is false that the NFL has done “little to address the problem.” Therefore **(C)** is correct. In paragraph 3, the author writes, “Proper tackling form—using the arms and shoulders to aim for a player’s midsection—should be taught at an early age.” From this we can infer that there is a proper way to tackle others, which minimizes risk of injury and is not necessarily dangerous. However, players who use improper tackling form may injure others, leading to more cases of CTE. This means **(A)** is incorrect. In paragraph 2, the author writes, “Recent autopsies performed on the brains of football players who have committed suicide have shown advanced cases of CTE in every single victim.” Based on this evidence, we can infer that scientists have established a definitive link between players who die untimely deaths and the onset of CTE. This makes **(B)** incorrect. In paragraph 4, the author writes, “NFL broadcasts often replay especially violent collisions while the commentators marvel at the players’ physical prowess. Some sports highlights television programs even feature weekly countdowns of the ‘hardest hits.’ When the media exalts such dangerous behavior, professionals are rewarded for injuring each other on the field.” From this we can infer that athletes who are praised for exceptionally brutal hits are likely to continue such behavior. This means **(D)** is incorrect. In paragraph 2, the author lists many things the NFL has done to try to combat the problem of CTE. Then, in paragraph 3, the author writes, “New regulations at the professional level cannot protect amateur players, especially young people... Youth, high school, and college leagues should also adopt safety rules even more stringent than those of the NFL.” Based on this information we can infer that the NFL has done more to mitigate future cases of CTE than youth, high school, or college leagues have done. Therefore **(E)** is incorrect.

2) **E**

In paragraph 3, the author notes that “youth, high school, and college leagues should also adopt safety rules even more stringent than those of the NFL.” The author suggests that NFL standards may protect professional players, but the regulations for amateurs are inconsistent with NFL standards. Therefore, increased NFL safety standards do not help prevent the injuries suffered by amateurs. The inconsistent application of safety regulations for all levels contributes to the incidence of CTE in amateur players. This supports **option (I)**. In paragraph 3, the author claims, “Young athletes should be educated about the serious dangers of head injuries at an early age.” This means there is a lack of education about the dangers of head injuries that contributes to the incidence of CTE in amateur players. This supports **option (II)**. In the final paragraph, the author argues that “amateurs” are “likely to try to imitate their favorite NFL athletes” when they watch violent highlight reels on sports programs. This means that amateur players’ desire to emulate professionals can contribute to the incidence of CTE in amateurs. This supports **option (III)**. Therefore **(E)** is correct.

3) **A**

**laudable** (*adjective*): worthy of praise; commendable.

In paragraph 3, the author states: “Efforts by the NFL and other professional sports leagues are certainly laudable; we should commend every attempt to protect the mental and physical health of players.” This tells us that we should commend *laudable* attempts, meaning we should praise them, so a good synonym is *praiseworthy*. Therefore **(A)** is correct. *Ineffective* means ineffective or useless. While the author states that efforts by the NFL are not enough, he or she does not suggest they are useless. This means **(B)** is incorrect. *Memorable* means unforgettable. The author is praising the NFL’s efforts, but he or she does not in any way suggest that these efforts are unforgettable. This makes **(C)** incorrect. *Audacious* means bold or daring. The author is praising the NFL’s efforts, but he or she does not in any way suggest that these efforts are particularly daring, only that they are worthwhile. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect. *Satisfactory* means acceptable or adequate. While the author suggests that efforts by the NFL are a step in the right direction, he or she explicitly argues that they are not adequate, and more should be done. This makes **(E)** incorrect.

4) **D**

The author’s main purpose in the final paragraph is to convince readers that fans and media alike should stop glorifying the violent hits that make football so dangerous. The author’s tone is insistent as he or she compiles evidence supporting this position. The final sentence in the paragraph is definitive, even dramatic: “Players must not be encouraged to trade their careers, their health, their happiness, and even their lives for the sake of a game.” Choice **(D)** is correct. The author is blaming the media and the fans, not him or herself. Therefore he or she is not remorseful so **(A)** is incorrect. Although the author describes a negative situation, he or she ends with a call to action for the future, implying that this situation may indeed improve in the future. This means the author is not hopeless. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. A perplexed tone suggests that the author is confused about something. The author is quite clear about his or her position, so **(C)** is incorrect. Although the author is assigning blame in this paragraph, he or she does not do so in an arrogant manner. This means **(E)** is incorrect.

5) **E**

**exalt** (*verb*): to praise or glorify something or somebody.

In the final paragraph, the author writes: “Sports media producers have become accustomed to showcasing the most aggressive tackles and the most intense plays. NFL broadcasts often replay especially violent collisions while the commentators marvel at the players’ physical prowess. Some sports highlights television programs even feature weekly countdowns of the ‘hardest hits.’ When the media exalts such dangerous behavior, professionals are rewarded for injuring each other on the field.” In the examples given, the media is portrayed as “showcasing” aggression and “marvel[ing]” at violence. Furthermore, the author argues that professional players are rewarded when the media exalts their hazardous behavior. Since the players are being rewarded, *exalts* must mean praises or glorifies. If the players were being criticized or condemned for their violent behavior, then they would not be rewarded. This means a good antonym is *castigates*. Therefore **(E)** is correct. *Mitigates* means makes less severe or painful. The media is glorifying such behavior, not making it less severe, so **(A)** is incorrect. *Venerates* means glorifies, so it is a synonym for exalts. This makes **(B)** incorrect. *Mollifies* means soothes or appeases. While this is different from glorifying violent behavior, it is not opposite,

so **(C)** is incorrect. *Expedites* means to hasten or speed up. The media is glorifying violent behavior, but it does not affect the speed of the behavior. This means **(D)** is incorrect.

6) **E**

In the final paragraph, the author describes the media as follows: "Sports media producers have become accustomed to showcasing the most aggressive tackles and the most intense plays. NFL broadcasts often replay especially violent collisions while the commentators marvel at the players' physical prowess. Some sports highlights television programs even feature weekly countdowns of the 'hardest hits.' When the media exalts such dangerous behavior, professionals are rewarded for injuring each other on the field and amateurs become more likely to try to imitate their favorite NFL athletes. Announcers, commentators, television producers, and sportswriters should engage in a collective effort to cease glorifying brutal plays." The author uses verbs such as showcase, marvel, feature, exalt, reward, and glorify to describe what the media does. He or she uses language like "aggressive tackles," "most intense plays," "violent collisions," "hardest hits," "dangerous behavior," and "brutal plays" to describe what the media depicts. By studying the language, we can determine that the author has chosen to emphasize the sports media's sensationalism in praising brutality. Therefore **(E)** is correct. Although the author is arguing that the sports media should be more responsible, he or she actually describes its current behavior as irresponsible. This means **(A)** is incorrect. While some people may claim that glorifying violence increases entertainment value in the sports media, the author would not likely agree with this position. Furthermore, the author does not emphasize entertainment value, which is a positive characteristic. Rather, he or she focuses on the sensationalism of the sports media, which is a more negative characteristic. This means **(B)** is incorrect. The author does not go so far as to characterize the sports media as senseless, meaning completely foolish or absurd. Because it is too extreme, **(C)** is incorrect. While the author describes the behavior of the players as "dangerous," he or she does not go so far as to describe the media itself as dangerous. This means **(D)** is incorrect.

7) **E**

In the final paragraph, the author writes, "NFL broadcasts often replay especially violent collisions while the commentators marvel at the players' physical prowess. Some sports highlights television programs even feature weekly countdowns of the 'hardest hits.'" Based on this information, we can understand that the author mentions "sports highlights television programs" as an example of how the media showcases violence. Later in the paragraph, the author adds that the media "gloriff[ies] brutal plays." This supports **option (I)**. In the final paragraph, the author writes, "Some sports highlights television programs even feature weekly countdowns of the 'hardest hits.' When the media exalts such dangerous behavior, professionals are rewarded for injuring each other on the field." Based on this information, we can understand that the author mentions "sports highlights television programs" as an example of how amateurs learn to mimic professional athletes. This supports **option (II)**. In the final paragraph, the author writes, "Some sports highlights television programs even feature weekly countdowns of the 'hardest hits.' When the media exalts such dangerous behavior, professionals are rewarded for injuring each other on the field." Based on this information, we can understand that the author mentions "sports highlights television programs" as an example of how professional athletes gain approval. This supports **option (III)**. Therefore **(E)** is correct.

8) **B**

In the last sentence, the author urges players to stop trading "their careers, their health, their happiness, and even their lives for the sake of a game." The ideas progress from least crucial (careers) to most crucial (lives). Organizing ideas in order of ascending power or importance is called *climax*. Therefore **(B)** is correct. The passage does not contain information to support choices **(A)**, **(C)**, **(D)**, and **(E)**. Therefore they are incorrect.