

• Reading Comprehension 2 Level 5

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

Have you ever heard someone use the phrase “once in a blue moon?” People use this **expression** to describe something that they do not do very often. For example, someone might say that he tries to avoid eating sweets because they are unhealthy, but will eat chocolate “once in a blue moon.” Or someone who does not usually like to go to the beach might say “I visit the shore once in a blue moon.” While many people use this phrase, not everyone knows the meaning behind it.

The first thing to know is that the moon itself is never actually blue. This is just an expression. The phrase “blue moon” actually has to do with the shape of the moon, not the color.

As the moon travels around the earth, it appears to change shape. We associate certain names with certain shapes of the moon. For example, when we can see a small part of the moon, it is called a **crescent** moon. A crescent is a shape that looks like the tip of a fingernail. When we cannot see the moon at all, it is called a new moon. When we can see the entire moon, it is called a full moon. Usually, there is only one full moon every month. Sometimes, however, there will be two full moons in one month. When this happens, the second full moon is called a “blue moon.”

Over the next 20 years, there will only be 15 blue moons. As you can see, a blue moon is a very rare event. This fact has led people to use the expression “once in a blue moon” to describe other very rare events in their lives.

Questions

- 1) Which of the following would be a good example of someone doing something “once in a blue moon”?
 - A. Mary likes to go to the mountains every weekend. Mary goes to the mountains once in a blue moon.
 - B. Tom rarely remembers to take out the trash. Tom takes out the trash once in a blue moon.
 - C. Cindy hates to wash the dishes. Nevertheless, she does it every day. Cindy washes the dishes once in a blue moon.
 - D. Ming sometimes forgets to do his homework. Ming forgets to do his homework once in a blue moon.

- 2) When does a blue moon happen in nature?
 - A. when there are two full moons in one month
 - B. when the moon has a blue color
 - C. when we cannot see the moon at all
 - D. when we can only see a small part of the moon

- 3) Using the passage as a guide, it can be understood that which of the following sentences does not contain an **expression**?
- A. Thomas has lost his mind.
 - B. An apple a day keeps the doctor away.
 - C. I'll mow the grass after I finish my homework.
 - D. It's never a bad time to start something new.
- 4) As described in paragraph 3, what is another example of something that has a **crescent** shape?
- A. your thumb
 - B. a distant star
 - C. the letter "C"
 - D. the letter "H"
- 5) In the final paragraph, the author states: "Over the next 20 years, there will only be 15 blue moons." This means that over the next 20 years, a blue moon will happen
- A. once a year
 - B. less than once a year
 - C. more than once a year
 - D. not enough information is provided
- 6) As used in the final paragraph, which is the best antonym for **rare**?
- A. common
 - B. strange
 - C. colorful
 - D. infrequent
- 7) In the final paragraph the author writes, "As you can see, a blue moon is a very rare event." The purpose of this statement is to
- A. answer an earlier question
 - B. provide an example
 - C. support an upcoming conclusion
 - D. challenge a previous statement

Answers and Explanations

1) **B**

In the first and last paragraphs, we learn that the phrase “once in a blue moon” describes very rare events. If Tom rarely remembers to take out the trash, then it makes sense to say he takes out the trash “once in a blue moon.” Therefore **(B)** is correct. **(A)** is incorrect because Mary goes to the mountains every weekend. This happens more often than the blue moon. **(C)** is incorrect because Cindy washes the dishes every day. This happens more often than the blue moon. **(D)** is incorrect because Ming sometimes forgets to do his homework. This happens more often than the blue moon.

2) **A**

In the third paragraph, the author tells us that when there are two full moons in one month, the second moon will be called a “blue moon.” Choice **(A)** is correct. The passage does not provide information to support choices **(B)**, **(C)**, and **(D)**. Therefore they are incorrect.

3) **C**

In paragraph 1 the author introduces the phrase “once in a blue moon.” Then the author tells us that “People use this expression to describe something that they do not do very often.” This lets us know that the phrase “once in a blue moon” is an expression. In paragraph 2 the author writes, “The first thing to know is that the moon itself is never actually blue. This is just an expression.” This lets us know that an expression contains information or facts that are not actually true. The sentence in **(C)** does not contain any facts that are not actually true. Therefore it is the correct choice. **(A)** is incorrect because a person cannot actually lose his or her mind. **(B)** is incorrect because eating an apple a day does not necessarily keep someone from having to visit the doctor. **(D)** is incorrect because there are some times in which it is indeed a bad idea to start something new. For example, it’s a bad idea to learn how to fly a kite in a lightning storm.

4) **C**

crescent (*noun*): the figure of the moon in its first or last quarter, resembling the segment of a ring thinning to points at the ends. In paragraph 3, the author says that “a crescent is a shape that looks like the tip of a fingernail.” Of all the choices, the letter “C” is the one most similar to this shape. Therefore **(C)** is correct. The passage does not provide information to support choices **(A)**, **(B)**, and **(D)**. Therefore they are incorrect.

5) **B**

This question involves some math. If a blue moon will happen 15 times over the next 20 years, this is the same as saying it will happen 15 out of 20 times, or $15/20$. Since $15/20$ is less than one, we know that the blue moon will happen less than one time per year. This means **(B)** is correct. The passage does not provide information to support choices **(A)**, **(C)**, and **(D)**. Therefore they are incorrect.

6) **A**

rare (*adjective*): something that does not happen very often.

The question asks us to find the best antonym. Antonyms are words that have opposite meanings. In the last paragraph, the author describes a blue moon as a “very rare event.” In this paragraph and the rest of the passage, blue moons are described as events that do not happen very often. Therefore, *common*, a word that means happening very often, is the best opposite of *rare*. Choice **(A)** is correct. The passage does not provide information to support choices **(B)**, **(C)**, and **(D)**. Therefore they are incorrect.

7) **C**

To answer this question correctly, it helps to use context. In the final paragraph the author writes, “As you can see, a blue moon is a very rare event. This fact has led people to use the expression “once in a blue moon” to describe other very rare events in their lives.” The key phrase here is “This fact has led people to.” This is meant to show that the fact that a blue moon is a very rare event lends support to the conclusion that the expression “once in a blue moon” to describe other very rare events in their lives. This means choice **(C)** is correct. The passage does not provide information to support choices **(A)**, **(B)**, and **(D)**. Therefore they are incorrect.