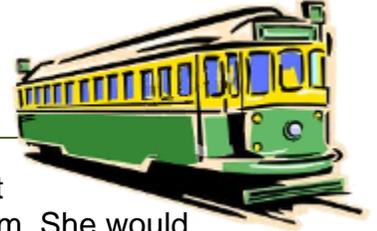


“Love Train”

Reading Comprehension – Short Stories

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



When I was a little girl, I loved for my mom to tell me stories about herself. No matter how tired she was, she never **adumbrated** them. She would fill the tales with the minutest details, and they were always fascinating.

Another thing she did was tell the stories with such **grandiloquence**! At different points she would stop and say, “Now what do you think that word means?” I would try to piece together what was happening in the story and make my best guess.

To this day, when I want to bug my friends, I use the huge words that I first learned leaning on Mom's shoulder as she recounted a snippet of her life.

My favorite story was the one about how my mom met my dad:

“I was 17 years old, but I already knew the kind of man I would marry. Take note:

“He would not be too **garrulous**. I tell you, Rosa, it's important for a man to make interesting conversation, but he must also take time to listen to what you have to say.

“And never **impertinent**. I'll never forget when I was 16; a boy from my church named Joe Turner came and knocked on our door. He didn't look my momma in the eye, and didn't say, 'Hello.' He just leaned against the door jamb and said, 'Rosa here?'

“My momma raised her brow and said, 'She is, but not for boys such as yourself.'

“But I **digress**. I'm supposed to be telling you about the day I met your daddy, right?

“Okay, so I was riding the Amtrak train between Providence and Philadelphia during my freshman year at Brown, and the door at the end of my car rattled open.

“He was tall and swarthy. He wore a thick, ivory, cable knit sweater with a gray wool scarf wrapped firmly around his neck. I couldn't tell what his heritage was and that intrigued me. What was he -- Indian, Portuguese, Peruvian?”

Mom would pause here and I would shout, “Cape Verdean!”

She'd continue:

“Well, if I had been shy, I might have just looked out the train window. But then where would I be now? You wouldn't even be here! So I let my eyes lock with his

as he wobbled down the moving train.

“He smiled a slight smile, not a big one. His eyes raised just enough to let me know he had spotted me too.”

I always loved this line and would smile at the image of my dad stumbling down the train and then noticing my radiant mom.

“So Rosa, once we spotted each other, your dad found a number of reasons to walk past me to go to the café car.

“I was sitting by myself along the aisle. So finally, I just slid over to the window, leaving the seat next to me empty.

“Your dad came back with two cups of hot cocoa and sat down with a smile. And we had the most delightful conversation!

“I could tell right then that this was no **ephemeral** crush – this was the real deal. I was going to end up loving this man forever.”

And then the part I loved best about the story.

“We pull into the train station in Philadelphia, and it’s time for me to get off. He was heading on to Washington where he was going to school.

“I prepared myself for some **hackneyed** expression as I got off the train. You know, ‘Great meeting you,’ or ‘Good luck at school.’

“I also worried he might try to sneak a smooch, which would have been a big turn off. We’d just met!

“Instead, he took my hand gently and gave it a little squeeze. He said, ‘If it’s the thought that counts, consider yourself kissed.’”

Mama said she just about died when he said that! Then she said to herself, “That man will be my husband.”

And so he is.

Questions:

1) As used at the beginning of the story, which is the best antonym for **adumbrated**?

- A. detailed
- B. lengthened
- C. invented
- D. simplified
- E. understated

2) As used in the beginning of the story, which is the best definition for **grandiloquence**?

- A. technical jargon
- B. archaic speech
- C. pithy expression
- D. overly ornate or pompous language
- E. foreign word or phrase

Questions (continued):

3) What is ironic about the title of this passage?

- A. Rosa's mother does not like clichés.
- B. The passage has nothing to do with a song.
- C. It is where Rosa's mother meets her husband-to-be.
- D. The train only went a short distance but their love continued forever.
- E. Rosa's mother could not have possibly loved her father after such a short train ride.

4) Why might the author have chosen Rosa as the narrator even though it is her mother who is telling the main story?

- A. to make the story harder to follow
- B. to make the story seem more straightforward
- C. to make it clear that Rosa's mother has passed away
- D. to make it clear that the story happened a long time ago
- E. to allow the reader to hear the story from Rosa's perspective

5) As used in the beginning of the story, which is the best definition for **garrulous**?

- A. conceited
- B. talkative
- C. narrow-minded
- D. fawning
- E. patronizing

6) Which situation best describes someone who has been **impertinent**, as used in the beginning of the story?

- A. A man crashes into the car in front of him.
- B. A student gestures rudely to his teacher.
- C. A child rushes out the door, forgetting to say good-bye to his mom.
- D. A woman refuses to let her son play video games before school.
- E. A dog chases all the cats in the neighborhood.

Questions (continued):

7) As used in the story, which is the best antonym for **digress**?

- A. stop
- B. stray
- C. shorten
- D. remember
- E. stay on course

8) What may Rosa's mother intend to convey to her child by telling this story?

- A. advice about what to look for in a partner
- B. regret that she met her husband on a train
- C. the suggestion that Rosa might find her husband on a train
- D. a yearning to go back to that time and place
- E. the idea that education should come before marriage

9) Judging from the passage, what does Rosa's mother find most important in a husband?

- I. humor
 - II. respectfulness
 - III. originality
- A. I only
 - B. III only
 - C. I and II
 - D. II and III
 - E. I, II, and III

10) What is implied in the following paragraph from the middle of the story?

"Well, if I had been shy, I might have just looked out the train window. Where would I be now? You wouldn't even be here! But I let my eyes lock with his as he wobbled down the moving train."

- A. Rosa's mother really wanted to simply look out the window.
- B. It is best to be outspoken in nearly all circumstances.
- C. As soon as their eyes locked they fell in love.
- D. A slight change in circumstances could have greatly altered Rosa's mother's life.
- E. Life was hard before technology allowed trains to offer a smooth ride.

Answers and Explanations

1) **A**

adumbrate (*verb*): To give a sketchy outline of; to disclose partially or guardedly.

At the beginning of the story, Rosa says that her mother never *adumbrated* her stories, even if she was tired. Instead, Rosa's mother "would fill the tales with the minutest details." These statements allow the reader to infer that stories that are adumbrated are easier to tell because they are not as detailed. Therefore, an antonym for *adumbrated* is *detailed*. **(A)** is correct.

To *lengthen* is to make longer. An antonym for *lengthen* is *shorten*. While leaving out details might make a story shorter, to *shorten* does not specifically mean to leave out details. To *adumbrate* is to leave out details. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. To *invent* is to create something or to make something up. To leave out details is not the opposite of making something up. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. To *simplify* is to reduce the complexity of something. Leaving details out of a story would simplify it. Therefore, *adumbrate* and *simplify* are similar, not opposite. **(D)** is incorrect. Something that is *understated* shows good taste. Showing good taste is not the opposite of lacking detail. Therefore **(E)** is incorrect.

2) **D**

grandiloquence (*noun*): pompous or unnecessarily ornate speech.

At the beginning of the story, Rosa tells us that her mother "tells the stories with such *grandiloquence*! At different points she would stop and say, "Now what do you think that word means?" The reader can infer from this statement that grandiloquence means using difficult words. Rosa goes on to say that when she wants to bug her friends, she uses "the huge words I first learned leaning on Mom's shoulder." The reader can understand that grandiloquent speech is difficult or flowery to the point of being pompous or unnecessary. Therefore **(D)** is correct.

Technical jargon is the specialized language used in a specific field or profession. Rosa's mother is relating stories from everyday life, not from a specific field or profession. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. *Archaic speech* is antiquated language, using words that were once in regular use but are now relatively rare and old-fashioned. While it appears that Rosa's mother was using difficult and perhaps rare words, there is nothing in the passage that suggests that her language was old-fashioned. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. A *pithy expression* is one that is brief and full of meaning or substance. Using difficult words does not make the language brief. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. There is nothing in the passage that suggests that Rosa's mother's was telling stories using foreign words or phrases. Therefore **(E)** is incorrect.

3) **D**

Something that is *ironic* is poignantly contrary to what was expected or intended. Here, the title *Love Train* is ironic because the train traveled over a short distance, unlike Rosa's parents' love, which went on forever. Therefore **(D)** is correct.

A *cliché* is a trite or overused expression or idea. Although it may be true that Rosa's mother dislikes clichés, the use of the title *Love Train* is not unexpected or contrary to what was intended. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. Although *Love Train* is also the title of a number of songs, it is not unexpected that a story titled *Love Train* would be about an actual train as opposed to a song. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. It is not unexpected for a story titled *Love Train* to be about people meeting and falling in love on a train. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. We know that Rosa's mother did in fact fall in love with Rosa's father over the course of a short train ride. Therefore, **(E)** is incorrect.

4) **E**

At the beginning of the story, Rosa tells us that her mother's stories were "fascinating." Rosa revels in the huge words she learns from her mother while listening to the stories. Later, we learn what part of the story Rosa likes best. As readers, we learn not only the story of how Rosa's mother and father met, but also how Rosa feels about that story and her mother. Using Rosa to tell the story allows the reader to understand Rosa's mother and her stories from Rosa's perspective. Therefore **(E)** is correct.

Generally, authors do not strive to make their writing more difficult to understand. They want readers to follow what they write. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. Positioning Rosa as the narrator retelling a story told by Rosa's mother makes the story somewhat *less* straightforward. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. There is no indication in the story that Rosa's mother has passed away. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. The fact that the story took place a long time ago is not verified in the story or important to the story. Generally, authors do not make choices to underscore something unimportant. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

5) **B**

garrulous (*adjective*): given to excessive and often trivial or rambling talk; tiresomely talkative.

In the middle of the story, Rosa's mother tells Rosa that the kind of man worth marrying "would not be too garrulous." Rosa's mother tells her that "it's important for a man to make interesting conversation, but he must also take time to listen to what you have to say." It can be inferred from these statements that someone who is garrulous is too busy talking to listen to others. Therefore **(B)** is correct.

Someone who is *conceited* holds an unduly high opinion of himself. While someone who is conceited might be too self-involved to pay attention to what others are saying, a lack of attention is not necessarily due to being too

talkative to listen. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. Someone who is *narrow-minded* has a biased viewpoint. Someone who is *narrow-minded* might not listen to someone because they disagree with them, not because they are too busy talking to listen. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. *Fawning* is trying to get someone's attention through excessive flattery. This does not indicate a failure to listen. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect. *Patronizing* is to treat someone in a condescending manner. While someone acting in a patronizing manner might not listen to someone else, it is because he thinks he is superior, not because he is too busy talking. Therefore **(E)** is incorrect.

- 6) **B**
impertinent (*adjective*): rude; insolent; inappropriate.

In the middle of the story, Rosa's mother tells Rosa what traits are important in a husband. Rosa's mother tells her that a man should never be *impertinent*. As an example, Rosa's mother tells a story about a boy that knocked on her door when she was 16. "He didn't look my momma in the eye, and didn't say 'Hello.'" Since it is rude to meet someone without looking them in the eye and saying hello, the reader can infer that *impertinent* means rude. Therefore **(B)** is correct.

None of the other answer choices present a situation in which someone acts rudely, so **(A)**, **(C)**, **(D)**, and **(E)** are incorrect.

- 7) **E**
digress (*verb*): to wander from one's path or main direction; to wander from the main subject in speech or writing.

After Rosa's mother begins the story of how Rosa's mother and father met, Rosa's mother discusses what kinds of traits a husband should have. She tells Rosa about a boy from her church. Then Rosa's mother says, "But I *digress*. I'm supposed to be telling you about the day I met your Daddy." The reader can infer from this that *digress* means straying from the story you are supposed to be telling. The opposite of straying is staying on course. Therefore **(E)** is correct.

To *stop* is not the opposite of straying off course. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. To *stray* is the meaning of *digress*, not an antonym, so **(B)** is incorrect. While straying off the original story might make a story take longer, *digress* does not mean to take longer. Therefore, to *shorten* is not an antonym for *digress*, so **(C)** is incorrect. To *digress* is to wander in a new direction, but one does not necessarily *digress* because one has forgotten the intended direction. Therefore, *remember* is not an antonym for *digress*. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

- 8) **A**
While telling the story of how she and Rosa's father met, Rosa's mother first directly tells Rosa what kind of traits she wanted and did not want in a husband. Rosa's mother then describes how she and her husband actually

met. Later, Rosa's mother explains that she knew that she was going to "end up loving this man forever," after they have "the most delightful conversation!" Finally, Rosa's mother tells her that he did not try to kiss her when she left the train, which Rosa's mother would have found "a big turn off." Instead, he took her hand and said something clever and romantic. These statements detail the reasons Rosa's mother fell in love with Rosa's father. The reader can infer that Rosa thinks that her mother had good reasons for choosing her father, as Rosa's mother hoped she would. Therefore **(A)** is correct.

The story does not contain information to support choices **(B)**, **(C)**, **(D)**, and **(E)**. Therefore they are incorrect.

9) **D**

There is nothing in the story that suggests that Rose's mother fell in love with Rose's father because he was funny. This eliminates **option (I)**. At the beginning of the story, Rosa's mother tells Rosa that it is important that a man "take time to listen to what you have to say." Rosa's mother then tells her a man should never be impertinent, or rude. The reader can infer from these statements that Rosa's mother believes that respectfulness is important in a husband. This supports **option (II)**. At the end of the story, Rosa's mother tells Rose that she was worried that Rosa's father would give her a hackneyed, or trite, goodbye. Rosa's mother was thrilled when instead he said goodbye in a charming, original way. Rose's mother "said to herself, 'That man will be my husband.'" This supports **option (III)**. Therefore **(D)** is correct.

10) **D**

In this passage, Rosa's mother implies that Rosa's mother and father would not have met if Rosa's mother had not looked Rosa's father directly in the eyes as he walked through the train. If Rosa's parents had not met on the train, they would not have married. If they did not marry, they would not have had Rosa as a child. Something as small as not looking away when a man passed by totally altered the course of Rosa's mother's life. Therefore **(D)** is correct.

The story does not provide any evidence that Rosa's mother really wanted to look out the window instead of at the man, so **(A)** is incorrect. Rosa's mother is simply recounting what happened and noting that a small change of action could have resulted in a radically different outcome. That does not suggest that Rosa's mother thinks people should always be outspoken. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. The passage suggests that Rosa's parents would not have met if Rosa's mother had looked away, but does not imply that they fell in love with that glance. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. Although it may be true that the story took place before technology allowed trains to offer smoother rides, this passage does not imply that life was harder, so **(E)** is incorrect.

11) **A**

ephemeral (*adjective*): lasting for only a short time; transitory; short-lived.

Near the end of the story, Rosa's mother says, "I could tell right then that this was no *ephemeral* crush – this was the real deal. I was going to end up loving this man forever." From this, the reader can infer that *ephemeral* means not real, or not long. *Fleeting* means passing quickly. Therefore **(A)** is correct.

Permanent means lasting forever, which is the antonym of *ephemeral*. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. *Ridiculous* means absurd, preposterous, or silly. While a ridiculous crush is likely to be short-lived, it doesn't necessarily follow that a crush that is not ridiculous would definitely last a long time. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. *Serious* means grave or earnest. Something that is short-lived is not necessarily earnest, so **(D)** is incorrect. *Young* means newly begun or immature. While a young crush could be short-lived, that is not always the case, so **(E)** is incorrect.

12) **C**

hackneyed (*adjective*): used so often as to be trite, dull, and stereotyped.

At the end of the story, Rosa's mother was preparing to get off the train. She expected Rosa's father to give "some *hackneyed* expression" when she got off. "You know, 'Great meeting you,' or 'Good luck at school.'" These phrases are so typical as to be expected. The reader can infer from this that Rose's mother expected Rose's father to use a stereotypical phrase to say goodbye. Unoriginal is the opposite of stereotypical. Therefore **(C)** is correct.

Happy means joyful, which is not the opposite of trite. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. *Humorous* means funny, which is not the opposite of trite. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. *Overused* is a synonym for *hackneyed*. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect. *Turbulent* means chaotic or disturbed, which is not the opposite of trite. Therefore **(E)** is incorrect.