

## “Scorpion”

Reading Comprehension – Short Stories

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



Soon after Navi got engaged to Roberto, she began learning about his seemingly magical origins.

She had heard many stories of Roberto’s birth city of Guanajuato, and they had all **captivated** her. She was spellbound by the many exotic tales he told her about the region. At one time, this colonial city was the source of two-thirds of the world’s silver.

“Our family goes to a beautiful church in Guanajuato,” Roberto had told her while they courted in the United States. “It is said that silver dust was mixed into the cement building blocks and that is why the church sparkles.”

Navi had been enthralled. Roberto always told such wonderful stories. She could not wait to see the city and meet all of Roberto’s family. Navi was excited and knew that the trip was sure to be inspirational.

While Roberto had imparted to Navi all the wonders of his beautiful city, it had not occurred to him to mention any dangers. They were young. They were in love. They lived only in the moment.

Navi was speechless when she saw the Oratorio de San Felipe. “It really does sparkle!” she exclaimed.

Navi kissed Roberto on the cheek. “I’ll meet you outside,” she said, leaving the church.

She pulled her sketchpad and pencils from her bag and went to sit against one of the glorious palm trees outside the church. She began sketching the **colossal** cupola, which extended mightily, three stories above the nave.

Suddenly, a sharp pain took hold of her left shoulder. It felt like an electrical shock. The pain began to **pervade** the rest of her body.

She had been stung by a scorpion!

The last thing Navi remembered was Roberto kneeling by her side. She woke up a week later with him holding her hand and telling her a story. “In Mexico, scorpions are **ubiquitous**. There are more scorpion deaths here than in any other place in the world. And they love palm trees,” he said, rubbing her hand with tears of relief in his eyes. “I should have mentioned that before.”

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Questions:

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1) As used in paragraph 2, which is the best antonym for **captivated**?

- A. dishonored
- B. enthralled
- C. repelled
- D. saddened

2) As used in paragraph 8, which is the best antonym for **colossal**?

- A. banal
- B. microscopic
- C. temporal
- D. inspiring

3) Based on information in the passage, it can be understood that which of the following conditions may result from a scorpion sting?

- I. unconsciousness
  - II. death
  - III. paralysis
- A. I only
  - B. I and II
  - C. II and III
  - D. I, II, and III

4) Which of the following sentences from the story most clearly foreshadows that something bad is going to happen?

- A. They lived only in the moment. *(paragraph 5)*
- B. It had not occurred to him to mention any dangers. *(paragraph 5)*
- C. "I'll meet you outside," she said, leaving the church. *(paragraph 7)*
- D. Suddenly, a sharp pain took hold of her left shoulder. *(paragraph 9)*

5) In paragraph 5, the author writes, "They were young. They were in love. They lived only in the moment." Which of the following is the best way to rewrite these sentences, while keeping their original meaning as used in the story?

- A. They were young and in love because they lived only in the moment.
- B. They were young and in love; they lived only in the moment.
- C. They were young and in love; therefore, they lived only in the moment.
- D. They were young and in love; conversely, they lived only in the moment.

6) Where is Guanajuato?

- A. Ecuador
- B. Cuba
- C. Guatemala
- D. Mexico

7) As used in paragraph 9, which is the best synonym for **pervade**?

- A. numb
  - B. paralyze
  - C. permeate
  - D. sicken
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Questions (continued):

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8) How does Roberto seem to feel about not having told Navi about scorpions?

- A. questioning
- B. perplexed
- C. remorseful
- D. validated

9) It can be inferred that Navi enjoys

- A. surprises
- B. writing and storytelling
- C. sketching and drawing
- D. traveling to various exotic destinations

10) What type of narrator is telling this story?

- A. first person, characterized as being a person in the story
- B. second person, characterized as speaking directly to the reader
- C. third person omniscient, characterized by knowing what all the characters are thinking
- D. third person focalized, characterized by knowing only what one character may be thinking

11) As used in the final paragraph, which is the best antonym for **ubiquitous**?

- A. scarce
- B. benevolent
- C. harmless
- D. omnipresent

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Do you think Navi should be upset with Roberto? Explain.

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## Answers and Explanations

1) **C**

**captivated** (*verb*): attracted and held; charmed.

In paragraph 2, the story says Navi “had heard many stories of Roberto’s birth city of Guanajuato, and they had all captivated her. She was spellbound by the many exotic tales he told her about the region.” Since Navi was “spellbound” by these tales, the reader can infer that *captivated* means charmed or fascinated. If someone is *repelled* by something, they are turned off or turned away from it. Since this is the opposite of being charmed, repelled is a good antonym for captivated. Therefore **(C)** is correct.

When someone is *dishonored*, that person has brought shame upon him or herself. Being shamed is not the opposite of being charmed, so dishonored is not an antonym for captivated. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. Someone who is *enthralled* is held by charm. This means the same thing as captivated, so enthralled and captivated are synonyms, not antonyms. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. When someone is *saddened*, something has made him or her sad. Being made sad is different from being charmed, but not opposite, so saddened is not an antonym for captivated. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

2) **B**

**colossal** (*adjective*): immense; huge; gigantic.

In paragraph 8, the story says, “She began sketching the colossal cupola which extended mightily, three stories above the nave.” Since the cupola extended really far, three stories over the central structure of the church, the reader can infer that *colossal* means huge. *Microscopic* means so small that it can only be seen with the help of a microscope. Since something really tiny is the opposite of something really huge, microscopic is a good antonym for colossal. Therefore **(B)** is correct.

*Banal* means unoriginal and boring. Boring is not the opposite of huge, so banal is not an antonym for colossal. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. *Temporal* means lasting only for a certain amount of time. Being limited by time is not the opposite of being huge, so temporal is not an antonym for colossal. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. *Inspiring* means exciting. Exciting is not the opposite of huge, so inspiring is not an antonym for colossal. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

3) **B**

In paragraph 10, we learn that Navi “had been stung by a scorpion.” In paragraph 11, Navi “woke up a week later.” We can infer from this information that the scorpion sting rendered Navi unconscious for a week. This supports **option (I)**. In paragraph 11, Roberto says, “There are more scorpion deaths here than in any other place in the world.” We can infer from this that a scorpion sting can cause death. This supports **option (II)**. Scorpions can

cause unconsciousness and death, but the story does not say that scorpions can cause paralysis. This eliminates **option (III)**. Therefore **(B)** is correct.

4) **B**

The bad thing that happens in the story is that Navi is stung by a scorpion. Navi probably would not have been stung if Roberto had warned her about the scorpions. Since the scorpion sting happened because Roberto did not warn Navi, the statement that “it had not occurred to him to mention any dangers” clearly foreshadows, or hints at, the bad event that happens later in the story. Therefore **(B)** is correct.

The statement “they lived only in the moment” tells the reader that Roberto and Navi were so happy in the present that they were not concerned with the past or the future. The scorpion sting is not related to their disregard for the past or future, so that statement is not foreshadowing. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. Although Navi is stung after she goes outside, her statement does not give the reader any indication of the danger to come, so it is not foreshadowing. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. Navi feels pain in her shoulder when she is stung by the scorpion. Therefore “suddenly, a sharp pain took hold of her left shoulder” is simply a statement of the action in the present, not an indication of what is to come. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

5) **B**

These three sentences contain three separate facts that are not related to each other in a specific way. Rather, they are all listed as equally important. “They were young and in love; they lived only in the moment.” This sentence captures the meaning of the three original sentences without altering it. Therefore **(B)** is correct.

The three sentences convey the idea that Roberto and Navi were young and in love and lived only in the moment. This does not mean that Roberto and Navi were young and in love because they lived only in the moment. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. Likewise, Roberto and Navi did not live in the moment because they were young and in love. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. The statement that Roberto and Navi lived only in the moment is not contrary to the statement that they were young and in love. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

6) **D**

In paragraph 2, the reader learns that Guanajuato is Roberto’s birth city. In paragraph 3, Roberto tells Navi about the church that his family goes to in Guanajuato. In paragraph 4, Navi “could not wait to see the city and meet all of Roberto’s family. Navi was excited and knew the trip was sure to be inspirational.” The reader can infer from this information that Navi and Roberto are going on a trip to Guanajuato. Later in the story, Navi and Roberto visit the church and Navi gets stung by a scorpion. In paragraph 11, Roberto says, “In Mexico, scorpions are ubiquitous. There are more scorpion deaths here than in any other place in the world.” The reader can infer from this information that Roberto and Navi are in Mexico. Since Roberto and Navi were visiting Guanajuato, Guanajuato must be in Mexico. Therefore **(D)** is correct.

The story does not provide information to support answer choices **(A)**, **(B)**, or **(C)**. Therefore they are incorrect.

- 7) **C**  
**pervade** (*verb*): to spread throughout.

In paragraph 9, the passage says, “Suddenly, a sharp pain took hold of her left shoulder.” Then, “the pain began to pervade the rest of her body.” Since the pain started in Navi’s shoulder, then moves out into the rest of her body, the reader can infer that the word *pervade* means to spread throughout. The word *permeate* means to spread or pass through, so it is a good synonym for pervade. Therefore **(C)** is correct

*Numb* means to deprive of sensation of feeling. This is not similar to spreading throughout, so numb is not a synonym for pervade. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. *Paralyze* means to render unable to move. Rendering something unable to move is not similar to spreading throughout something. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. *Sicken* means to make someone sick. Making someone sick is different than spreading throughout something, so sicken is not a synonym for pervade. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

- 8) **C**  
In paragraph 11, Navi wakes up with Roberto by her side after being stung by a scorpion. Roberto says to Navi, “In Mexico, scorpions are ubiquitous. There are more scorpion deaths here than in any other place in the world. And they love palm trees,” he said, rubbing her hand with tears of relief in his eyes.” Since Roberto has tears of relief in his eyes, the reader can infer that Roberto felt terrible about Navi’s scorpion sting. Next, Roberto says, “I should have mentioned that before.” The reader can infer from this statement that Roberto wishes he had told Navi about scorpions earlier. To feel *remorseful* is to feel sad or regretful about having done something wrong. Since Roberto feels badly about not telling Navi about scorpions, he feels remorseful. Therefore **(C)** is correct.

To feel *questioning* is to have doubts about something. Roberto wishes he had told Navi about the scorpions earlier, and he does not have doubts about this. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. To feel *perplexed* is to be filled with confusion about something. Roberto feels bad about not telling Navi about scorpions, not filled with confusion. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. To feel *validated* is to feel confirmed or strengthened. Roberto does not feel confirmed about failing to tell Navi about scorpions. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

- 9) **C**  
In paragraph 6, the passage says, “Navi was speechless when she saw the Oratorio de San Felipe. ‘It really does sparkle!’ she exclaimed.” The reader can infer from this that Navi was impressed with the appearance of the church. Then, in paragraph 8, Navi “pulled her sketchpad and pencils from her bag and went to sit against one of the glorious palm trees outside the church. She began sketching the colossal cupola which extended mightily,

three stories above the nave.” Since Navi immediately goes out to sketch the beautiful church, we can infer that Navi enjoys sketching and drawing. Therefore **(C)** is correct.

The only surprise in the passage is an unpleasant one—a scorpion sting—so there isn’t enough information in the story to determine whether or not Navi likes surprises. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. Navi does love to listen to Roberto’s stories, but does not do any storytelling of her own in the passage. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. While Navi listens to many exotic tales, she only travels to one exotic location. We don’t have enough information to know whether Navi likes traveling to various exotic locations. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

10)**C**

In this passage, the narrator knows what Navi and Roberto think and feel as well as what they do. For example, in paragraph 2, the narrator knows that Navi “was spellbound by the many exotic tales.” In paragraph 9, “a sharp pain took hold of [Navi’s] shoulder. It felt like an electrical shock.” The reader can infer from these statements that the narrator knows how Navi feels. In paragraph 5, the narrator says, “While Roberto had imparted to Navi all the wonders of his beautiful city, it had not occurred to him to mention any dangers.” The reader can infer from this that the narrator knows what Roberto is thinking (or not thinking). Since the narrator knows what Navi and Roberto think and feel, the narrator is third person omniscient. Therefore **(C)** is correct.

The narrator is not a person in the story, so the narrator type is not first person. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. The narrator does not speak directly to the reader, so the narrator type is not second person. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. The narrator knows what both Navi and Roberto are thinking, so the narrator type is not third person focalized. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

11)**A**

**ubiquitous** (*adjective*): found seemingly everywhere.

In the last paragraph, Roberto says, “In Mexico, scorpions are ubiquitous. There are more scorpion deaths here than in any other place in the world.” Since there are so many scorpion deaths there, the reader can infer that there are a lot of scorpions nearly everywhere in Mexico. The reader can infer from this that *ubiquitous* means found nearly everywhere. *Scarce* means hard to find. Since hard to find is the opposite of found everywhere, scarce is a good antonym for ubiquitous. Therefore **(A)** is correct.

*Benevolent* means well-meaning. Well-meaning is different from found everywhere, but not opposite, so benevolent is not an antonym for ubiquitous. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. *Harmless* means unable to harm. Unable to harm is not the opposite of found everywhere, so harmless is not the opposite of ubiquitous. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. *Omnipresent* means everywhere. Since this has virtually the same meaning as ubiquitous, it is not an antonym for ubiquitous. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.