from An American Childhood by Annie Dillard

Selection Test B

Critical Reading Identify the letter of the choice that best completes the statement or answers the question.

1. In An American Childhood, what does the author call the thing that comes into her childhood bedroom at night?
   A. a swift spirit
   B. a ghost
   C. her friend
   D. a princess

2. Why does the author of An American Childhood not wake up her little sister, Amy?
   A. Her parents tell her not to wake up Amy.
   B. Amy is sleeping too soundly.
   C. She is too afraid to move.
   D. She wants to protect Amy.

3. Why does Dillard describe her sleeping sister in An American Childhood?
   A. to make fun of her sister
   B. to contrast her sister’s calmness and her own fear
   C. to develop sympathy for her sister
   D. to show how frightening the night was for her sister

4. What mood does the author of An American Childhood create with the following details? “It made noise. It had two joined parts, a head and a tail, like a Chinese dragon. . . . I dared not blink or breathe.”
   A. happiness
   B. fear
   C. peace
   D. jealousy

5. In An American Childhood, why does the author tell how she solved the mystery of the lights?
   A. to show that siblings are often envious of one another
   B. to explain how she discovered that inside and outside worlds connect
   C. to explain how passing car lights can cause reflections on indoor walls
   D. to confirm that children are often afraid of the dark

6. What is the author describing in the following passage from An American Childhood?
   "I climbed deliberately from the depths like a diver who releases the monster in his arms and hauls himself hand over hand up an anchor chain till he meets the ocean’s sparkling membrane and bursts through it. . . ."
   A. a bad dream that used to make her scream
   B. a trip she took later in life
   C. her struggle to separate fantasy from reality
   D. her father’s stories of life at sea
7. In *An American Childhood*, Dillard compares her experience of car lights with what past experience?
A. carnival lights
B. noisy children playing outside her window
C. noise from jackhammers in the street
D. light streaming in from the moon

8. Which of the following details does Dillard use to support her main insight in *An American Childhood*?
A. "All night long she slept smoothly in a series of pleasant and serene, if artificial-looking, positions. . . ."
B. "There was a world outside my window and contiguous to it."
C. "When I was five, growing up in Pittsburgh in 1950, I would not go to bed willingly because something came into my room."
D. "It was a passing car whose windshield reflected the corner streetlight outside."

9. What is Dillard's purpose in *An American Childhood* for comparing her insight about the car lights with another insight she had had the year before during a nap?
A. to tell stories of her childhood
B. to explain why she was afraid to take naps
C. to talk about her sleeping disorder
D. to express her frustration with herself

10. How does the mood of *An American Childhood* change during the bedtime experience the author describes?
A. from wonder to boredom
B. from terror to control
C. from boredom to wonder
D. from control to terror

11. In *An American Childhood*, how does the experience of solving the mystery change the young girl?
A. She becomes more fearful.
B. She learns to confide in her parents.
C. She learns to share more with her sister.
D. She learns the difference between reason and imagination.

12. Which of the following statements is an insight conveyed by *An American Childhood*?
A. "The things in the world did not necessarily cause my overwhelming feelings. . . ."
B. "Sometimes it came back, sometimes it didn’t."
C. "I could see the door whiten at its touch . . . ."
D. "My sister Amy, two years old, was asleep in the other bed."

13. How can you tell that the little girl in *An American Childhood* continued to value the world of the imagination?
A. She finally admits that the story is not really true.
B. She enjoys scaring herself even after she solves the mystery.
C. She refuses to accept the explanation for the mystery.
D. She says that parents should not tell children scary stories.
14. As a child, how did the author of An American Childhood come to feel about her place in the world?
   A. She felt she was simply part of a collection of things that made up the world.
   B. She knew that her words and thoughts meant a great deal to the world.
   C. She was fearful because she was not sure if she was real or imaginary.
   D. She felt that her life mattered only in terms of her imagination.

Vocabulary and Grammar

15. Which of the following words is a synonym for luminous in “a luminous shape”?
   A. jagged
   B. shining
   C. moving
   D. dark

16. Which of these sentences contains a personal pronoun?
   A. Joe and Carol decided to go to a movie.
   B. They saw a new science-fiction thriller.
   C. Many of the town’s teenagers were in the theater.
   D. Everyone was glad to have caught the film.

17. Which sentence does NOT use conceivably correctly?
   A. Conceivably, we were the best musicians in the band.
   B. The sun, conceivably, did not rise yesterday.
   C. David’s joke was, conceivably, the worst one I had ever heard.
   D. Mr. Oeberst is, conceivably, the most talented teacher I know.

18. Which of these words is a possessive pronoun?
   A. me
   B. they
   C. all
   D. hers

Essay

19. In this excerpt from An American Childhood, the author uses vivid details to describe her experience at bedtime. Write an essay in which you give examples of details the author uses. Explain what feelings she conveys through the details.

20. In an essay, tell what you think is the author’s purpose in this part of An American Childhood. Start by mentioning details Dillard uses to describe her experience. Then, explain what these details lead you to determine is Dillard’s purpose in reporting the experience.

21. Thinking About the Big Question: Is truth the same for everyone? In this excerpt from An American Childhood, Annie Dillard’s truth changes when she finds a rational explanation for the light in her bedroom. Using Dillard as an example, write an essay in which you explain how the experiences of young children lead them to view truth differently from adults.