

## READING TEST

35 Minutes—40 Questions

**DIRECTIONS:** There are several passages in this test. Each passage is accompanied by several questions. After reading a passage, choose the best answer to each question and fill in the corresponding oval on your answer document. You may refer to the passages as often as necessary.

## Passage I

**LITERARY NARRATIVE:** This passage is adapted from the essay “Rough Water” by David McGlynn (©2008 by David McGlynn).

One of my best races could hardly be called a race at all. I was a senior in high school, gunning to qualify for the USA Junior Nationals. The previous summer I had missed the cut by less than a second in the mile, and just the day before, at my high school regional meet, I had come within three-tenths of a second in the 500-yard freestyle. The qualification time was 4:39.69; I swam a 4:39.95. The next day, Sunday, I drove with my mother to the far side of Houston where a time trial was being held—an informal, unadvertised event thrown together at the last minute. The only races swum were those the swimmers requested to swim. Most were short, flapping sprints in which swimmers attempted to shave off a few one-hundredths of a second. I didn’t have the courage to face the mile, and since I’d struck out in the 500 the day before, I decided to swim the 1,000-yard freestyle. Forty lengths of the pool. It was a race I’d swum fast enough to believe that given the right confluence of circumstances—cold water, an aggressive heat, an energetic meet—I could make the cut. I had fifteen seconds to drop to qualify.

By the time I stood up on the blocks, I was not only the only one in the race, I was practically the only one in the natatorium. The horn sounded and I dove in. I was angry and disheartened at having missed the cut the day before and I had little belief that I could go any faster today.

About six hundred yards in, my coach started to pace. I stayed steady on, not in a hurry, not about to get my hopes up. In my mind, I had already missed the time. Then a boy from a rival high school, whom I hardly knew, unfolded his legs and climbed down from the bleachers and started to cheer. He squatted low to the water and pointed his finger toward the end of the pool, as if to say, *That’s where you’re going, now hurry up.* I thought, *If he’s cheering, maybe I’m close.*

Sometimes a moment comes along when the world slows down, and though everything else moves around us at the same frenetic speed, we’re afforded the opportunity to reflect in real-time rather than in retrospect. It

is as though we slip into a worm-hole in the fabric of time and space, travel into the past and then back again to the present in the same instant. That morning, swimming, I remembered a day in late September the year before, the last day my swim team had use of an outdoor pool. All summer long my teammates and I swam under an open sky. After this day we would spend the rest of the season in a dank and moldy indoor pool.

The triangular backstroke flags were strung across the lanes and the adjacent diving well. My teammates liked to run down the long cement deck, jump out over the diving well, and try to grab hold of the line. Many of them could jump far enough to make it. I could not, though I tried every day. I tried that day, and missed. Since I would not have another shot until May, I decided to try again. I squared up and ran, my feet wet against the pavement, and just as my foot hit the water’s edge, one of my teammates called out “Jump!” I bent my knees and pushed off hard and got my hand around the flag line. I pulled the whole thing into the water. Autumn was coming and I wondered if there was a metaphor in what I had just done; a fortune folded inside a cookie: my greatest effort would come when I was down to my last opportunity.

Now it was March and I was down to my last opportunity, thinking about that day and hearing the word “Jump!” as my eyes followed the finger of the boy pointing me onward. What I understood—not later, but right then, in the water—was how little this swim added up to in the world. I had spent more than a year training for this one swim, and when it was finished the world would be no different than before it began. If no one else cared, then the swim was mine alone. It mattered because it was the task before me *now*, the thing I wanted *now*. Swimming, I had long understood, is a constant choice between the now and the later: exhaustion now for the sake of fitness later, all those Friday nights spent in the pool in pursuit of an end that seemed always one step farther on. I was out of later, this was the end, and I made my choice. I cashed in the energy I set aside for climbing out of the pool and unfolding my towel and tying my shoes. I’ve never sprinted harder in my life, not before and not since. I hit the wall. I knew by instinct, by the spasm of my tendons and the ache in my bones, before I ever turned toward the clock or heard my coach scream, that I had made it.

1. The narrator of the passage can best be described as a swimmer who primarily:
  - A. recalls the swim of his life and the factors that motivated him during that swim.
  - B. remembers the events that inspired him to participate in a time trial at the Junior Nationals.
  - C. contrasts the joy of winning competitions early in the season with his later struggles to succeed.
  - D. chronicles his swimming career, from childhood through high school.
2. Which of the following events mentioned in the passage happened first chronologically?
  - F. The narrator stood on the blocks at the Sunday time trial his senior year.
  - G. The narrator leapt out over the diving well in late September.
  - H. The narrator swam the 500-yard freestyle in the high school regional meet as a senior.
  - J. The narrator heard a boy from a rival school cheering.
3. The narrator describes the natatorium as being nearly empty of spectators the day of his race in order to:
  - A. illustrate that the perfect racing conditions the narrator had hoped for weren't likely to occur.
  - B. demonstrate that, contrary to the narrator's expectations, the meet was energetic.
  - C. explain why the narrator's coach paced at the sound of the horn.
  - D. identify why the narrator felt a rush of energy before the race.
4. The narrator indicates that when he swam the 1,000-yard freestyle in the time trials, the world, for a moment, seemed to:
  - F. speed up, blurring past and present events.
  - G. rush past, forcing him to reflect in retrospect.
  - H. move in slow motion, as did everything around him.
  - J. slow down, allowing him to reflect in real time.
5. The passage indicates that during the narrator's swim at the time trial, he understood for the first time that:
  - A. his goals would always be one step farther on.
  - B. he had trained for this swim for over a year.
  - C. the swim was an event that was important to him alone.
  - D. swimming is a choice between the now and the later.
6. Based on the passage, the "end" the narrator mentions in line 80 most likely refers to his:
  - F. final pursuit of fitness.
  - G. last chance to qualify for Junior Nationals.
  - H. memory of his final Friday night practice.
  - J. ultimate realization that he had defeated the other competitors in the race.
7. The narrator of the passage characterizes the time trial in Houston as:
  - A. one long sprint in which swimmers attempted to improve their times.
  - B. a meet advertised as a way to qualify for the Junior Nationals.
  - C. a regional meet that featured only the 500-yard freestyle and 1,000-yard freestyle.
  - D. an informal swimming event put together at the last minute.
8. The statement "*That's where you're going, now hurry up*" (lines 35–36) can most directly be attributed to the:
  - F. cheering boy, as he verbally criticizes the narrator's efforts.
  - G. cheering boy, as he shouts encouragement to the narrator.
  - H. narrator, as he speculates about what the cheering boy meant when the boy pointed at the pool.
  - J. narrator, as he angrily contemplates his response to the cheering boy.
9. For the narrator, compared to practicing in the outdoor pool, practicing in the indoor pool is:
  - A. more productive.
  - B. more liberating.
  - C. less appealing.
  - D. less competitive.
10. When the narrator heard "Jump!" in his mind while swimming (line 67), he was most likely remembering:
  - F. his teammate's command the day the narrator caught the flag line.
  - G. his own shout as he leapt off the outdoor pool's deck that fall.
  - H. the cheers of the boy from the rival school.
  - J. the abrupt start of his race that Sunday.