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• Reading Comprehension Assessment

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

The Incredible Machine

Everyone has a favorite attraction at an amusement park, and I am no different. However, unlike most people who seem to prefer rollercoasters, my favorite ride is a little more gentle. Every time I go to Coney Island, Navy Pier, or the Santa Monica Pier, I absolutely have to ride the Ferris wheel.

The Ferris wheel is simple and yet also quite complex. That is, riding it is easy, but how it works is complicated. A series of carts are attached to a wheel, which is attached to a rim. That rim rotates vertically around an axis, and gravity keeps the carts upright. As simple as the ride seems, only advanced engineers can make safe and fun Ferris wheels.



What It Lacks in Thrills...

While the Ferris wheel is not as thrilling as a rollercoaster, it is still very exciting. The fact of being high in the air makes it so much more entertaining than a lot of rides. I mean, how often do you hang from that high up in daily life?

Nevertheless, I have to admit, I don't seek Ferris wheels out because of their excitement. Rather, I find them very relaxing. At the top of the Ferris wheel, you get beautiful sights of the park. You also get a sense of calm that you don't get in the hustle and bustle of the park below.

Additionally, Ferris wheels are also gorgeous to look at when they are lit up at night. In fact, the original Ferris wheel was designed as much to be seen as to be ridden.

It Happened at the World's Fair

The first Ferris wheel was made by and named after George Washington Gale Ferris, Jr. He designed it for the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. It was the tallest attraction there, standing 264 feet high.

However, visitors to the fair were impressed by the size of the ride as well as the mechanics of it. In 1893, anything that was not turned by hand was considered a sight to see. And the wheel, which was a machine, was truly incredible to see. Further, as one visitor put it, the wheel was amazing because it seemed to be missing support. That is, it did not look like it could stand on its own. And yet it did and even rotated!

They Keep Reaching Higher and Higher

Ferris wheel technology has only improved since then. Most of today's Ferris wheels are much larger than that first one. The largest in the world is the "Singapore Flyer," which stands slightly taller than twice what Ferris's did!

Today, the Ferris wheel is the most common amusement park ride. But that does not mean you should take them for granted. Instead, be thankful for Ferris' invention. The next time you're at an amusement park, don't just look up at the impressive wheel in the sky on your way to a newer attraction. Take it for a spin!

- 1) As used in paragraph 1, the word **attraction** most nearly means
- A. sense
 - B. park
 - C. ride ✓
 - D. vision
- 2) It can be understood that Coney Island, Navy Pier, and the Santa Monica Pier are all examples of
- A. amusement parks ✓
 - B. Ferris wheels
 - C. vacation spots
 - D. boat docks
- 3) As used in paragraph 2, which is the best antonym for **complex**?
- A. impressive
 - B. beautiful
 - C. exciting
 - D. simple ✓
- 4) What does the author like best about Ferris wheels?
- A. the impressive engineering and beauty of them
 - B. the excitement and thrills they guarantee
 - C. the beautiful sights and relaxation they allow ✓
 - D. the fact that most amusement parks have one
- 5) According to the passage, the Ferris wheel was originally designed for
- A. Coney Island
 - B. the world's fair ✓
 - C. Disneyworld
 - D. Singapore
- 6) This passage was most likely written to
- A. describe the author's favorite amusement park rides
 - B. explain the original design of Ferris wheels and how they work today
 - C. describe the history of Ferris wheels and why they are so popular
 - D. explain the history of Ferris wheels and why the author likes them ✓
- 7) Using information in the passage, the reader can understand that the tallest Ferris wheel in the world is
- A. under 250 feet tall
 - B. between 250 and 500 feet tall
 - C. between 500 and 750 feet tall ✓
 - D. over 750 feet tall
- 8) In paragraph 2, the narrator says, "As simple as the ride seems, only advanced engineers can make safe and fun Ferris wheels." Can you think of any other machines that seem simple but actually are not? List at least two and explain why they are not actually simple.

A mechanical pencil looks very simple but it is pretty complex.

Filled with springs and many small pieces, it is quite challenging to create. Another simple looking but complex machine would be a calculator. Calculators need to be programmed to answer any equation, long or short, as quick as possible.

9) In paragraph 3, the narrator says, "While the Ferris wheel is not as thrilling as a rollercoaster, it is still very exciting." Can you think of any other machines that are not "thrilling" but still "exciting"?

I find airplanes really exciting to go on. It's crazy to think that you are trapped in this box thousands of feet over the sky. They might not be thrilling to sit in for long flights but they are fascinating to look at. Another exciting but not thrilling machine are bumper cars.

They don't travel fast and don't give the same thrill as rollercoasters but it sure is fun to drive them around and bump into other people.

10) In the final section of the passage, we learn how Ferris wheels "keep reaching higher and higher."

This seems to be a common trend among the developers of modern technology. What makes us want to continually strive to create something bigger and better? Is this good? Discuss.

It is always obvious to people that owning a newer, bigger, better and cooler object makes us stand out. People want to show off their belongings or products to others, and to make companies bigger, they go bigger. I say this meaning that companies will always look for ways to create something better than other companies. I agree with the fact that creating something bigger and better is good. It could result in us humans having less work and making life a lot more easier.

The thing that continues to strive us to make bigger and better things could either be competition or enhancing our lives. I agree with both these reasons.

Firstly, many companies want more money and fame over others so they accomplish this by making better and bigger products. There is a constant fight/war between companies to see

who can produce the bigger and better. My Dad works for a toy company and there is a lot of competition going on. Mattel, his company, are

going against Hasbro. Both companies always seek ways to produce bigger and better toys to get more income and better sales. On the other

hand, there are some companies that focus on enhancing their products

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and finding ways to help make life easier for us. These companies try to make bigger and better products to improve our lives. They still care about competition but they mainly create these products to help us with troubles. In conclusion, I believe that competition and drive to enhance our lives are the two reasons why companies are creating bigger and better products. This is a good thing because step by step our lives are getting easier.

