ALBERTA ENGLISH 10-1 · FULL COURSE

Reading Comprehension — Practice Test

Alberta English 10-1 • 50 questions

This practice test was made by AI and there may be mistakes. If a question or answer looks wrong, use the Flag a mistake button to let Brett know so he can fix it.

Reading I — The Compass on Miller Lake

Use this reading for questions 1 to 10.

By four o'clock the light over Miller Lake had thinned to a pale gold, and the wind combed the loose snow into white waves across the ice. Maren stood at the edge of the reeds with her younger brother's mitts stuffed in her coat pocket and a knot of worry tight in her stomach. An hour earlier, Tomas, who had turned ten the week before, had dropped their grandfather's brass compass through the fishing hole their father had drilled that morning. It had slipped from his cold fingers, struck the rim of the hole, and vanished into the dark water.

Their grandfather, who had died the previous spring, had carried the compass on every hunting trip he ever took, and Tomas had promised to keep it safe. Maren had promised something too. She had told her father she would watch Tomas closely and keep him away from the thin ice near the reeds, where the current kept the surface weak. Now Tomas stood shivering beside her, his red scarf bright against the snow, saying nothing, which for Tomas was the surest sign of misery.

'Stay on the packed trail,' Maren said warily, though her voice shook a little. 'If I call, come straight back. Do not run.' She took the long-handled rake from the sled and inched toward the fishing hole, listening to the ice sing and groan under her boots. Every crackle sent her heart hammering. Halfway there, she stopped, lowered herself flat onto her stomach, the way her father had taught her, and spread her weight wide. The cold bit through her coat, but the ice held.

She reached the hole and worked the rake in slow circles until its teeth clinked against something small and hard. When she drew the compass up, dripping and shining, Tomas laughed with relief from the trail. Maren did not laugh yet. She lay still a moment longer, breathing hard, proud and frightened at the same time, and then she began the long, careful crawl back.

1

The main idea of Reading I is that

A. A brass compass is valuable because it is old

B. Acting with care while afraid can be a form of courage

C. Younger brothers should never be taken ice fishing

D. Winter lakes are safe if a trail is packed in the snow

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2

The compass is especially important to the family because

A. Their father bought it that morning

B. Maren found it buried in the sled

C. Their grandfather carried it on every hunting trip

D. Tomas won it as a prize at school

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3 **From the detail that Tomas says nothing, the reader can infer that Tomas**

A Is deeply upset about losing the compass

B Is bored and wants to go home

C Is angry with Maren for scolding him

D Does not care about the compass

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4 **In Reading I, the word warily suggests that Maren speaks**

A Recklessly

B Angrily

C Cheerfully

D Cautiously

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5 **The mood created while Maren crosses the ice is mainly**

- A Peaceful
- B Tense
- C Humorous
- D Bitter

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6 **The phrase the wind combed the loose snow is effective because it**

- A Uses personification to make the wind seem active and alive
- B Uses a simile to compare the snow to ocean water
- C Uses a metaphor to compare Maren to the wind
- D Uses rhyme to make the setting sound musical

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7 **The setting contributes to the conflict in Reading I because**

- **A** The lake is crowded with other fishing families
- **B** The coming darkness means the compass is worthless
- **C** The thin ice near the reeds makes the rescue dangerous
- **D** The cold weather has frozen the fishing hole shut

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8 **When Maren lowers herself flat onto the ice, the writer shows that Maren**

- **A** Has given up on reaching the fishing hole
- **B** Hopes Tomas will crawl out and help her
- **C** Is too frightened to take another step
- **D** Remembers what she was taught and acts with care

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9 **The phrase the ice sing and groan functions mainly to**

- A Warn of danger and build suspense for the reader
- B Suggest that the lake is safe and welcoming
- C Explain how the fishing hole was drilled
- D Show that Maren is imagining the sounds

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10 **The ending of Reading I suggests that Maren has**

- A Decided never to return to Miller Lake
- B Faced her fear without becoming careless
- C Promised to give the compass to Tomas
- D Forgotten the promise she made her father

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Reading II — First Snow

Use this reading for questions 11 to 20.

The first snow comes at night without a sound,

and lays its hush on field and fence and road.

The grain bin wears a soft white cap of snow,

and sparrows crowd the cedar, fluffed with cold.

Snow falls like sifted flour from a grey sky,

erasing tracks the hares made yesterday.

The yard dog shakes a dusting from his back

and noses at the strange, clean smell of it.

My father checks the gate, then stands a while,

his breath a small cloud in the early light.

He does not call the snow a gift or curse;

he only nods, as if to greet a neighbour.

By noon the sun will comb the drifts to shine,

and melt will bead the eaves in silver drops.

But now the farm is held in quiet hands,

and everything, for once, is in no hurry.

11 **The main idea of the poem in Reading II is that the first snow**

- **A** Ruins the work the family did in the fall
- **B** Arrives as a warning of a difficult winter
- **C** Slows the farm down and brings a sense of calm
- **D** Makes the speaker wish to leave the prairie

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12 **According to the poem, the sparrows respond to the cold by**

- **A** Crowding into the cedar, fluffed against the cold
- **B** Flying south before the snow begins
- **C** Hiding inside the empty grain bin
- **D** Chasing the hares across the field

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13 **The father in the poem can best be described as**

A Annoyed by the extra work the snow will cause

B Afraid that the storm will damage the farm

C Eager to begin clearing the road at once

D Calm and accepting of the weather as part of farm life

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14 **In the poem, the word hush refers to**

A A warning

B A silence

C A command

D A secret

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15 **The overall tone of the poem is**

- A Urgent
- B Mocking
- C Calm and reflective
- D Fearful

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16 **The phrase snow falls like sifted flour is an example of**

- A Personification, giving the snow human feelings
- B A metaphor, stating that snow is flour
- C Imagery that appeals only to the sense of taste
- D A simile, comparing falling snow to sifted flour

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17 **The poem is set**

- **A** Early in the morning on a farm after overnight snow
- **B** Late at night in a city during a blizzard
- **C** At noon in the spring, as the last snow melts
- **D** In the evening, before the first snow begins

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18 **The images in the poem appeal mainly to the sense of**

- **A** Smell
- **B** Sight
- **C** Taste
- **D** Hearing

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19 **The final phrase of the poem, in no hurry, functions mainly to**

- **A** Warn the reader that the family is late for work
- **B** Introduce a new conflict for the father
- **C** Complain that snow makes farm work impossible
- **D** Reinforce the mood of patience and stillness

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20 **The speaker of the poem is best described as**

- **A** A visitor who finds the farm strange and lonely
- **B** A worker who resents the coming winter
- **C** An observer who notices small details with appreciation
- **D** A child who is disappointed that school is open

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Reading III — The Paper Route

Use this reading for questions 21 to 30.

I was thirteen the winter I took over the morning paper route on our street in Calgary, and I believed the job would be simple. Fifty-two houses, one heavy canvas bag, and a list my older sister had taped to the fridge. For the first week I managed well enough, rolling each paper tightly, the way she had shown me, and dropping it inside the storm door before the house went bright with breakfast lights.

Then, on the coldest morning of January, my alarm failed, and I woke to my father shaking my shoulder in the dark. It was twenty past six. The papers sat bundled on the step, stiff with frost, and I felt sick with shame. My father did not scold me. He pulled on his boots, split the bundle without a word, and walked the far half of the street while I ran the near half, my unzipped coat flapping.

At number 18, Mrs. Kowalski opened her door before I reached it. She took the paper with both hands and said she read the weather page first, every day, with her tea. At number 40, old Mr. Chen told me he timed his walk to the corner by my arrival. I had thought the papers were only newsprint and ink. That morning I understood they were also small promises people planned their mornings around.

After that day I set two alarms and laid out my mitts, scarf, and route list the night before, in a methodical row by the door. I was not suddenly perfect. I still lost the odd elastic band in the snow. But I never again treated the route as a chore I could shrug off, and by spring, when I handed the bag back to my sister, I did so with more care than I had received it.

21 **The main lesson the narrator learns in Reading III is that**

A Responsibility means understanding that others depend on your work

B A paper route is too difficult a job for a teenager

C Parents should help with every difficult task

D Winter mornings are the worst part of living in Calgary

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22 **On the morning the alarm failed, the narrator father helped by**

A Driving the narrator along the whole route

B Calling the newspaper office to excuse the narrator

C Scolding the narrator and sending him out alone

D Walking the far half of the street with half the papers

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23 **The narrator felt sick with shame on that morning mainly because he**

- **A** Was afraid his father would take away the route
- **B** Realized he was late for people who counted on him
- **C** Had lost the route list his sister had made
- **D** Knew the papers had been ruined by frost

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24 **In Reading III, the word methodical describes a row that is**

- **A** Colourful
- **B** Temporary
- **C** Orderly and carefully planned
- **D** Hidden

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25 **The tone of Reading III is best described as**

- A Reflective and honest
- B Bitter and accusing
- C Formal and distant
- D Playful and mocking

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26 **The writer includes Mrs. Kowalski and Mr. Chen mainly to show**

- A How friendly the people on the street were
- B How the narrator learned that people relied on the papers
- C Why the route took longer than expected
- D Which houses were hardest to reach in winter

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27 **The central problem the narrator faces in Reading III is that he**

- A Loses the canvas bag in deep snow
- B Quarrels with his sister about the route list
- C Is given more houses than he can finish
- D Oversleeps on the coldest morning and must face the result

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28 **The phrase small promises functions in Reading III to**

- A Describe the size of the rolled newspapers
- B Explain why customers paid for the papers
- C Reframe the papers as commitments people counted on
- D Suggest the narrator made promises he could not keep

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29 **According to Reading III, Mrs. Kowalski reads first, every day**

A The sports scores, with her breakfast

B The weather page, with her tea

C The front page, with her husband

D The comics, with her grandchildren

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30 **By the end of Reading III, the narrator has become**

A More mature and responsible than he was at the start

B Determined to keep the route for another year

C Less interested in pleasing his customers

D Angry that his sister gave him the job

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Reading IV — Backstage

Use this reading for questions 31 to 36.

[The backstage area of a school auditorium, minutes before the evening performance. A curtain rustles offstage.]

MAYA: You have paced the same three steps for five minutes, Cole. Sit down before you wear a hole in the floor.

COLE: I cannot sit. My first line is gone. Completely gone. I open my mouth and there is nothing there.

MAYA: Your first line is, The rain has stopped, so we can leave now. You said it perfectly at lunch.

COLE: At lunch there were twelve people eating pizza. Tonight there are two hundred people, and my grandmother in the second row.

MAYA: Then say it to your grandmother. She has heard you forget things since you were four, and she still shows up.

COLE: What if I freeze in the middle, like I did at rehearsal on Tuesday?

MAYA: On Tuesday you stopped for four seconds, Cole. Four. Then you found the line and finished the whole scene. Nobody remembers the four seconds except you.

COLE: You really think so?

MAYA: I know so. And I will be standing in the wings with your cue cards, the big ones you wrote yourself, in case you need a glance.

COLE: You kept those? I threw them toward the bin.

MAYA: I fished them out. That is what stage managers are for. Now breathe with me. In for four, out for four.

[Cole breathes slowly. The stage lights hum.]

COLE: The rain has stopped, so we can leave now.

MAYA: There it is. Curtain in two minutes. Go and say it just like that.

31 **The main conflict in Reading IV is that Cole**

- A Has lost the costume he needs for the play
- B Believes Maya has hidden his cue cards
- C Wants to leave the play and go home
- D Fears he will forget his lines and freeze on stage

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32 **According to the scene, Cole grandmother will be sitting**

- A In the front row, beside Maya
- B In the second row of the audience
- C Backstage, beside the curtain
- D At home, watching a recording

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33 **From her words and actions, the reader can infer that Maya is**

- A Impatient and eager to replace Cole
- B As nervous as Cole about the performance
- C Calm, supportive, and prepared to help
- D Unaware that the play is about to begin

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34 **In the scene, the wings are**

- A The space at the side of a stage, out of audience view
- B The seats closest to the stage
- C The curtains at the back of the stage
- D The lights above the stage

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35 **The mood of the scene changes from**

A Joyful to sorrowful

B Angry to forgiving

C Calm to chaotic

D Tense to reassuring

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36 **The playwright reveals the characters in Reading IV mainly through**

A A narrator who describes their thoughts

B What they say and do in dialogue with each other

C A detailed description of the auditorium

D Letters the characters wrote before the play

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37 **Maya reminds Cole that at rehearsal on Tuesday he**

- **A** Paused for four seconds and then finished the scene
- **B** Refused to go on stage at all
- **C** Forgot every line in the first scene
- **D** Performed without a single mistake

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38 **Maya mentions the cue cards mainly in order to**

- **A** Prove that Cole did poor work at rehearsal
- **B** Remind Cole that he threw them away
- **C** Give Cole a safety net so he feels less alone on stage
- **D** Show Cole that stage managers do the real work

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39 **When Cole repeats his first line near the end, it shows that he**

- **A** Is practising a different scene from the play
- **B** Has regained his confidence and remembers the line
- **C** Is only pretending to be ready for Maya
- **D** Wants Maya to say the line for him

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40 **The ending of the scene suggests that Cole will**

- **A** Ask to be replaced before the curtain rises
- **B** Leave the auditorium with his grandmother
- **C** Read his lines from the cue cards on stage
- **D** Go on stage and perform despite his nerves

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Reading V — The Hardest-Working Pond on the Prairie

Use this reading for questions 41 to 48.

A beaver pond may look like nothing more than still water and mud, but it is one of the hardest-working habitats on the prairie. Beavers build dams of sticks, mud, and stones across slow streams. The dam holds back water and spreads it into a pond, where the beavers build a lodge with underwater entrances that help protect them from predators. A family of beavers may maintain several dams along one stream, repairing each breach with fresh mud and branches.

A beaver can stay underwater for up to 15 minutes, and its large flat tail works as a rudder when it swims and as a warning drum when it slaps the surface. Behind a dam, the pond slows floodwater, traps sediment, and stores water in the soil long after nearby creeks have run low. The pond is usually deep enough that it does not freeze to the bottom in winter, and beavers store branches underwater as a winter food supply, so the pond serves them in every season.

Other species benefit quickly. Frogs lay eggs in the calm shallows, ducks nest along the edges, and young fish find shelter among the flooded plants. Insects gather over the still water, drawing swallows and bats at dusk. During dry summers, ranchers in some parts of Alberta have noticed that beaver ponds keep wells and dugouts from falling as fast, because the stored water seeps slowly back into the ground instead of rushing away downstream.

Beavers can also create problems, flooding roads or cutting valued trees, so land managers sometimes install pond levellers, pipes that quietly drain a pond to a safe height without removing the dam. The goal is balance. A resilient wetland, able to recover after flood or drought, often begins with one determined beaver and a mouthful of sticks.

41 **The main idea of Reading V is that beaver dams**

A Are a problem that should always be removed

B Create wetlands that store water and support many species

C Are built mainly to protect beavers from the cold

D Have little effect on the land around them

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42 **According to Reading V, a beaver can stay underwater for up to**

A 15 minutes

B 5 minutes

C 30 minutes

D 45 minutes

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43 **Pond levellers are used in order to**

- **A** Help beavers build dams more quickly
- **B** Attract more ducks to a pond
- **C** Control the water level without removing the dam
- **D** Keep predators away from the lodge

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44 **In Reading V, the word resilient describes a wetland that is**

- **A** Very large
- **B** Man made
- **C** Full of fish
- **D** Able to recover after flood or drought

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45 **The tone of Reading V is best described as**

A Informative and balanced

B Angry and one sided

C Humorous and mocking

D Fearful and warning

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46 **The writer names frogs, ducks, and young fish mainly to**

A List the animals that beavers eat

B Compare the sizes of prairie animals

C Give specific examples of species helped by the pond

D Show which animals damage beaver dams

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47 **According to Reading V, the beaver tail is used both as**

A A paddle for digging and a store of food

B A rudder for swimming and a warning signal

C A support for sitting and a tool for cutting

D A blanket in winter and a fan in summer

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48 **The main purpose of Reading V is to**

A Persuade readers to keep beavers as pets

B Tell an entertaining story about one beaver

C Describe how to build a dam by hand

D Explain how beavers shape wetlands and why balance matters

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49 **Reading V differs from Reading III mainly because Reading V**

- **A** Explains a subject with facts, while Reading III teaches through personal experience
- **B** Is set in Alberta, while Reading III is not
- **C** Uses dialogue, while Reading III uses none
- **D** Has no main idea, while Reading III has one

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50 **Readings II and V are alike in that both of them**

- **A** Tell the story of a named young character
- **B** Are written in the first person
- **C** Invite the reader to value the quiet natural world of the prairie
- **D** Warn the reader that nature is mostly dangerous

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ANSWER KEY

1.	B	**10.**	B	**19.**	D	**28.**	C	**37.**	A	**46.**	C
2.	C	**11.**	C	**20.**	C	**29.**	B	**38.**	C	**47.**	B
3.	A	**12.**	A	**21.**	A	**30.**	A	**39.**	B	**48.**	D
4.	D	**13.**	D	**22.**	D	**31.**	D	**40.**	D	**49.**	A
5.	B	**14.**	B	**23.**	B	**32.**	B	**41.**	B	**50.**	C
6.	A	**15.**	C	**24.**	C	**33.**	C	**42.**	A		
7.	C	**16.**	D	**25.**	A	**34.**	A	**43.**	C		
8.	D	**17.**	A	**26.**	B	**35.**	D	**44.**	D		
9.	A	**18.**	B	**27.**	D	**36.**	B	**45.**	A		

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